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## Mass. 'mainstreams' prisoners with AIDS

*The Department of Corrections reverses its segregation policy*

By Jennie McKnight

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC) has changed its policy of segregating prisoners with AIDS and two months ago began reintegrating those prisoners into the general prison population. Although the DOC's policy had been long criticized by prisoners rights advocates and AIDS activists, its reversal was not publicized until a story appeared Feb. 17 in the *Boston Herald*.

News of the policy change was met with cautious approval by some advocates for prisoners with AIDS, while the president of the union representing prison guards expressed strong opposition to the change.

Before the policy change, which was implemented in December of 1989, state prisoners diagnosed with AIDS (as defined by the Centers for Disease Control) were segregated at the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. (Prisoners who have tested positive for antibodies to HIV — both symptomatic and asymptomatic, were not held at Shattuck, but remained in the general population.) Although the segregated prisoners usually arrived at the hospital ward with some kind of acute health problem, most usually improved physically but were forced to remain at Shattuck. The hospital, which was designed as an acute care facility, had no recreational area, library or other resources provided to other prisoners.

"Obviously we could not keep segregating a portion of the population," said Kathy Robertson, a spokeswoman for the DOC. She told *GCN* the practice of keeping prisoners at Shattuck "was not a fair thing to do," and that the DOC had been working with administrators and correction officers for "the last couple of years" to change the policy. Robertson said that in December when the reintegration process began, there were eight prisoners with AIDS at Shattuck. All have now rejoined the general population, she said.

According to DOC statistics, there are currently 11 prisoners (nine men and two women) in Massachusetts with full-blown AIDS. In addition, there are 101 men and 24 women who are symptomatic with HIV infection, and 82 men and 27 women who have tested positive for HIV but have no symptoms. Eighteen prisoners with AIDS have died while incarcerated by the state. Robertson said that "less than 15 percent" of the nearly 9000 state prisoners have voluntarily been tested for HIV antibodies. Robertson said the low percentage of those who had volunteered to be tested was understandable "if people think they're going to be segregated at Shattuck."

Robert Greenwald, an attorney with Boston's AIDS Action Committee (AAC) who has done legal work for people with AIDS (PWAs) in prison, said the shift in DOC policy was in line with changes PWA advocates have been pushing for a while. But while he applauded the abandoning of the segregation policy, he also expressed concern about the treatment of prisoners with HIV that might come in its wake.

Greenwald said he was concerned about the kind of health care the reintegrated prisoners might receive as well as the kind of environment the prisoners with AIDS might face. "Have all the health care personnel in all the facilities been trained on HIV treatment?" asked Greenwald. "Will these prisoners have access to various treatments like AZT. Will they be administered aerosolized pentamidine properly? ... What kind of education of prison personnel and other inmates has taken place to guarantee people can move back into the general population without being exposed to violent abuse?"

When asked about the health care provided at the various state prisons, Robertson said that the medical personnel at those facilities had been trained in treating HIV infection. She also said that AIDS educational programs have been introduced for both prisoners and guards. In the short time since the prisoners with AIDS from Shattuck have been back in the general population Robertson said she knows of no instances of physical attacks on the reintegrated prisoners.

Although the prison guards have supposedly been exposed to education about HIV and its transmission, it is not clear how successful those efforts have been. In the *Herald* reports on the reintegration policy, the president of the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union criticized the policy change while demonstrating a lack of understanding about how HIV can be transmitted. The union president, Danny O'Neil told the *Herald* "It's a dangerous and possibly deadly move that threatens not only corrections officers, but inmates, too." O'Neil was also quoted as saying, "I wouldn't eat in a prison again. How do you know who is cooking and handling the food?"

Robertson said she was puzzled by O'Neil's remarks. "From his statements and comments it's obvious he doesn't understand the issue," she said. Robertson added that the guards had been involved in the process of changing the policy from the beginning and had agreed to the reintegration. She also said O'Neil had attended the AIDS education program for the guards. *GCN* was unable to reach O'Neil by press time.

Sue Sullivan, staff attorney for Prisoner Legal Services, said she thought O'Neil's comments demonstrated a need for better AIDS education for guards. She and Greenwald also said AIDS education and support services for prisoners should be expanded. Sullivan said she was aware of several requests by prisoners to form HIV/AIDS support groups. Although she said she was concerned about the potential for breaches of confidentiality of prisoners who might want to participate in such groups, "one of the best ways to work this out is to negotiate with inmates."

Greenwald said that while the AAC pro-

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## BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## Black gay men and lesbians gather in Atlanta

*But the Third Annual National Black Gay and Lesbian Conference and Health Institute is not without controversy*

By Ayofemi Folayan

ATLANTA — Sponsored by the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum of Los Angeles and hosted by the African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance of Atlanta, the third Annual National Black Gay and Lesbian Conference and Health Institute met February 16-19 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel here.

The first day of the conference, titled "Celebrating Our History, Creating Our Future," was devoted to the Health Institute. The opening plenary session featured a keynote address by Byllye Avery of the National Black Women's Health Project, who described the project's model of wellness and self-empowerment for Black women. (See related story, p. 7) Workshops were divided into three tracks focusing on AIDS, Substance Abuse, and Women, and a total of 27 workshops were offered during the three time slots. More than half of these focused on AIDS-related topics. A luncheon presented Dr. Jacob Gayle from the Centers for Disease Control.

A memorial service that included tributes to Pat Parker, Joe Beam, Alvin Ailey, Lawrence Washington, and Mabel Hampton, was held Friday night. One especially moving part of the program included the unveiling of a section of the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt. The evening's events concluded with a rousing performance by the Lavender Light Gospel Choir from New York City. After the official closure of the Health Institute portion of the conference, many of the participants made tracks to TRAXX, a local gay club, for an AIDS benefit featuring comedian Danitra Vance and singers Teren and Danan from LA.

The leadership conference began on Saturday morning with a plenary session made notable by the absence of Keith St. John of Albany, New York, the nation's first openly gay Black elected official (See

*GCN*, Nov. 19, 1989), who was unable to deliver his scheduled keynote address because his flight was canceled due to bad weather. A new videotape produced by Dr. Sylvia Rhue of Los Angeles chronicling the role of the Leadership Forum in the '90s, was a weak substitute for St. John.

Workshops for this portion of the weekend included a "Leadership Development" curriculum and a Development (Fundraising and Grant Writing) track. One notable new component in the workshop schedule was "Grand and Proud," an in-depth look at the history of cross-dressing and transvestites, led by workshop co-chair Madame Edna Brown. Topics as diverse as "African American Lesbian and Gay Spirituality" and "If God is the Answer, Then I Want A Second Opinion" were two of thirty-three different workshop options. A number of workshops, including "We Are Sisters and Brothers" and "Co-sexual Organization Building" focused on the relationships between Black gay men and lesbians.

Saturday evening featured a banquet and entertainment by local Atlanta musicians Mystique and LA vocal duo Teren and Danan. Prior to the entertainment and the dance which followed, however, conference attendees heard a stirring keynote address by Barbara Smith, publisher of *Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press*. In her speech, entitled "Revolutionary Responsibility," Smith cited the writings of Black feminists Pat Parker and Audre Lorde as she exhorted the audience to turn their attention from the accumulation of BMWs, real estate, and closets full of leather clothes to the development of a Black political agenda.

The banquet included presentations of awards to Jewel Williams, owner of the

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## British leaders consent to pass the buck

LONDON — At a conference last October, the British Labour Party passed a resolution mandating the party's leadership to equalize the ages of consent for heterosexuals and gay people. The resolution was greeted with alarm and dismay by several of the party's more conservative leaders.

The Labour Party recently announced that if it comes to power following the next general election, members of Parliament will be allowed a "free vote" on reducing the age of consent for gay people here to 16 years. Critics characterize the "free vote" as a classic compromise that lets leadership off the hook. The Labour Campaign for Gay and Lesbian Rights has already condemned the move.

□ Roger Moody

## Week-long Selma sit-in ends

SELMA, Ala. — Black students at Selma High School ended a five-day sit-in Feb. 12, but the racial tensions that sparked the sit-in and brought the public school system to a standstill for a week continue. The act of civil disobedience came after Black community members charged that racism had led to the dismissal of Norward Roussell, the first Black school superintendent in the city's history. Although Roussell has since been reinstated, his contract runs out in June, according to the *Boston Globe*.

After the school board voted initially not to extend Roussell's contract, the five Black members of the 11-person school board announced their resignations. According to Roussell and his supporters, the deciding factor in the board's decision was racism and not a lack of managerial skills as the board charged.

The student-run sit-ins at Selma High School and City Hall ended after Roussell appealed to the protesters. "He felt it was in our best interest to leave," said demonstrator Latima Salaam. "Plus, the school board would fire him if we didn't leave."

Seventy percent of the students in the Selma school system are Black, and protesters angry over the Roussell decision have since called for an elected school board. Currently, the board is appointed by the City Council, which also has a majority of white members.

Although he said that white school board members had threatened him with the loss of his job, Roussell said he will not expel the students who sat-in. However, he did say that he would consider a more minor disciplinary action.

□ Chris Hassell

## Boston dyke bar postpones opening date

BOSTON — Somewhere Else, Boston's much-missed lesbian bar, is still planning to re-open despite rebuilding delays. Ann Renzi told *GCN* that she and Patty McNeis are guessing that it will be another few months before the club can open.

Somewhere Else closed a year ago when arson gutted the building at 45-47 Franklin Street. The rebuilt bar will be located at the same address.

□ Laura Briggs

## Calif. protesters sleep in

IRVINE, Calif. — Students at the University of California campus here built a cardboard "shantytown" earlier this month to protest a policy change that prevents unmarried couples from living together in housing for married students. According to *The New York Times*, Chancellor Jack Petalson sparked the protest by deleting a set of provisions from a housing manual that allows unmarried couples to live in family dormitories.

For the last year and a half, three lesbian

couples were allowed to live in the housing after proving financial need. In response to the protests, university officials have claimed that gay and lesbian partners have never qualified for family housing, and that the lesbians were admitted as "roommates."

In addition to occupying the cardboard and tent structure outside the university's administration building, students have also staged a sit-in and mounted a petition drive. Over 400 students and faculty have signed a petition asking the university to validate domestic partnership.

Attempts by administrators to oust the students were thwarted when the university ombudsman, Ronald Wilson, intervened and said the students had the right to protest

□ Jennie McKnight

## Gay rights bill tabled in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — Although Rep. Pat Kane said that likelihood of passing a gay rights bill in this state was similar to "a snowball's chance in hell," he forced the House to consider one anyway Feb. 8, according to Equal Time. And although the House Judiciary Committee killed the bill by tabling, the six-year Democrat from Sioux Falls vows to continue his efforts to add sexual orientation to the state human rights law's list of protected classes. "We need to attack the whole concept of bigotry and discrimination, root it out and do something about it," he said.

Ten years ago, Kane's eldest son told him he was gay. Since then, the rancher-turned-politician has fought for a number of human rights issues, including pushing to have Martin Luther King Day and Native American Day recognized as state holidays. Both Kane and Jean, his wife, are members of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

Kane said his biggest stumbling stone has been apathy. Recently, Pat and Jean Kane wrote a letter to the editor of the Sioux Falls *Argus Leader* supporting the rights of gay people and received only four responses total; two positive and two negative. "The silence," said Jean, "is deafening."

□ Karl Schoonover

## Gay video provokes million dollar lawsuit

VALLEY FORD, Calif. — Susan and John Williamsen were in for a shock when the video store next door to their gas station told them to check out a gay porn movie. The Williamsens, who are devout Catholics, were outraged to find that their very own gas station was used in the opening sequences of Scott Masters' feature "Full Service."

According to the *Sentinel*, the Williamsens "do not recall giving the video company permission to film their station." After seeking out a lawyer ("They came to me in tears," said attorney Gary Nadler), they filled a lawsuit Jan. 9 against the film makers, saying that the video "falsely imputes that John Williamsen is a homosexual, and that said plaintiff engages in homosexual acts." The Williamsens are asking for \$1 million to cover "severe emotional distress and damage to their reputation, anxiety, grief, humiliation, shame, and worry."

□ Karl Schoonover

## Attorney general pushes for injunction against Operation Rescue

BOSTON — Attorney General James Shannon entered a case to seek an injunction against anti-abortion groups, including Operation Rescue, from blocking access to women's health clinics around Massachusetts, according to the *Boston Herald*.

The injunction would provide a "safe access zone," which protesters would be prohibited from entering, outside eight clinics

in Boston, Brookline, Hyannis, Worcester, Springfield and New Bedford.

The city of Brookline already has such an injunction in place. As a result of the injunction, large fines are levied against anti-abortion groups blocking access to clinics in Brookline. The practice has significantly reduced the number of "hits" by anti-abortionists.

On Feb. 17, at least 100 people were arrested for blocking clinic access to the Worcester Planned Parenthood.

□ Laura Briggs

## Miners end strike

CASTLEWOOD, Vir. — Pittston coal miners ratified a four-year contract by a two-to-one margin Feb. 20, ending a 10-month strike that has attracted widespread support from labor and progressive groups throughout the U.S. Mine workers will be back at work Feb. 26 with a \$1000 settlement bonus, according to the *New York Times*.

The four-year contract includes 100 percent medical coverage, a pension comparable to other mine workers' contracts, and favorable job security terms. The \$64 million in fines levied against the United Mine Workers' union and the status of 13 workers accused of picket line violence remain unresolved.

The announcement of the settlement was marred by rumors that Eastern Airlines, whose workers have been on strike for 11 months, was to receive a \$120 million contract from the federal government, partially because of the help from the Labor Department. The Labor Department's Elizabeth Dole, who helped settle the Pittston strike, denied knowledge of a federal contract, which would violate the government's vow of neutrality in the strike.

□ Laura Briggs

## oob turns 20

WASHINGTON — The February 1990 issue of *off our backs* celebrates the feminist newsjournal's twentieth anniversary. In addition to its usual informative news sections, including international and national coverage of issues important to women — like the Montreal massacre, abortion news, health news, lesbian news — the twentieth anniversary issue contains retrospective pieces by collective members and forward-looking theoretical works.

For *oob* readers who don't go back the entire two decades, there are brief but fascinating accounts of how the paper emerged and evolved (ever wonder about the paper's commitment to low-tech production?), who's been part of *oob* and why (are they straights? dykes? bis?), and the paper's role in feminist movement (reporting on as well as participating in controversy). And the summaries of the paper's coverage during its 20 years of publication provide an interesting historical perspective for feminists and *oob* readers — whether you've been one or both for two months, two years or two decades!

*oob* is published monthly. Subscriptions are \$17 for individuals and \$30 for institutions. For info or to subscribe, write: off our backs, 2423 18th St., NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, D.C. 20009; or call: (202) 234-8072.

□ Jennie McKnight

## AIDS and prisons: case law update

NEW YORK — *PWA Support*, a legal assistance newsletter for people with AIDS, reports several recent decisions regarding HIV infection and prisoners. Included are the following:

Multnomah County, Oregon entered into a settlement agreement with an incarcerated PWA. The County paid the prisoner \$50 in damages for each day of his disciplinary confinement. The prisoner's confinement had resulted from refusing a direct order to wear a red wristband signaling blood and body fluid precautions. The County also modified its policies by eliminating the red wristband requirement for PWAs and agreeing to stop segregating PWAs.

A Cook County, Illinois court (*People v. Madison and Adams*) declared unconstitutional a state statute requiring HIV testing of persons convicted of certain criminal of-

fenses, including those which pose a risk of transmission.

In *Brock v. State*, an Alabama court reversed the conviction of an HIV positive prisoner for assault for biting a prison guard because it did not find sufficient evidence to conclude that a human bite could spread the virus.

In Pennsylvania, (*Feigley v. Fulcomer*) a prisoner claimed that corrections officials' failure to routinely give mandatory HIV tests to prisoners violated his Eighth Amendment rights. The court granted partial summary judgment for the prison authorities and held that failure to implement mandatory testing did not constitute deliberate indifference to the plaintiff's serious medical needs. The court also ruled that the policy did not constitute failure to protect him from contracting the virus. The prisoner's second claim under the Eighth Amendment, however, survived — that the defendants' refusal to test him for HIV upon his request is punishment that involves the unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain by failing to relieve the anxiety that might accompany an individual's uncertainty as to whether he is HIV positive.

*PWA Support* is published by the Prisoners' Legal Services of New York, 105 Chambers St., New York, N.Y., 10007.

□ Mike Riegle

## London project for Black gay men and lesbians

LONDON — The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre project (BLGC) is a London-wide organization that began in 1985. The main goals of the project are to do the following: set up a centre where Black lesbians and gays can meet and support one another; encourage all to share skills and information; provide advice and counseling, including a telephone helpline; develop a library of books, tapes and other materials on issues relevant to us; form links with other organizations; provide resources for Black lesbian and gay groups; educate public about lesbian and gay issues and help dispel ignorance and prejudice; organize parties, readings and other events; and, finally, raise money.

For more information, write to the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX or ring them at 01-885-3543.

□ Kelly Gaines

## PWAs housing rights violated

BOSTON — In a letter recently sent to Mayor Ray Flynn, the Boston AIDS Consortium Housing Task Force charged the city of Boston with discrimination against people with AIDS in public housing, according to the *Boston Herald*.

The letter said that PWAs "have systematically been denied access to BHA (Boston Housing Authority) elderly and handicapped developments, though federal and state law entitle [PWAs] to this housing." The letter further states that the city is inviting "yet another civil rights suit." Boston is currently under federal court order to desegregate public housing because many housing projects are or have been designated for white people only.

The mayor's adviser on AIDS, Dr. George Lamb, has responded by saying that he will recommend that preference be given to PWAs who apply for public housing in the application process.

□ Laura Briggs

## Correction

The Feb. 8 story about the Senate approving the Hate Crimes Statistics Act should have said that the amendment which passed by a 96-0 vote was proposed by the bipartisan, politically-mixed caucus, not Right-wing senators. It was introduced to head off Sen. Jesse Helms' (R-N.C.) anti-gay amendment to allow senators to explain to conservative constituents why they voted for a bill Helms characterized as supportive of the lesbian and gay agenda. *GCN* regrets the error.



# Governor's race heats up in Mass.

*So far, there has been little agreement within the local community about who should succeed Michael Dukakis*

By Laura Briggs

BOSTON — In a campaign that has gone on for over six months, there is still no clear consensus among gay and lesbian community activists on which gubernatorial candidate to support. According to most polls, former Attorney General Francis Bellotti and Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Murphy are the front runners in the 1990 Massachusetts gubernatorial race, with Boston University President John Silber not far behind. Activists are split between those who are uncommitted, those who back Bellotti because of his strong support of gay rights, and those who are backing Murphy because of her longtime pro-abortion rights stand.

When the campaign began this summer, immediately following the U.S. Supreme Court *Webster* decision limiting abortion rights, it seemed that abortion was likely to be a determining factor in this overwhelmingly pro-choice state. Murphy was the early leader, running as the pro-choice candidate, and receiving the local National Organization for Women (NOW) endorsement.

Murphy began to lose ground, though, when the full ramifications of the Massachusetts budget deficit became clear: the likelihood of a tax increase, alongside the probability of funding cuts in social ser-

*Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, Silber referred to Massachusetts as a "welfare magnet" for immigrants from "the tropical climate," and he also asked why Lowell should be the "Cambodian capital of America." These most recent remarks drew fire from diverse constituencies across the commonwealth and led many to call him racist.

On Feb. 1, a coalition of lesbian and gay organizations held a press conference to denounce Silber (see *GCN*, Feb. 11). Many lesbian and gay activists say that the most important aspect of the governor's race has become opposing and defeating Silber.

"For me right now, the governor's race is about Silber, the anti-semitism, the racism, the homophobia he mobilizes. We have to look at the damage he's done" said Judy Andler, a local lesbian activist. She said that in the fall of 1989, "Lowell passed this English-only resolution. There a big Cambodian and Puerto Rican community in that city, and Silber mobilizes the racism that's already there."

## The front runners

The other candidates, Rep. John Flood on the Democratic side and Rep. Steven Pierce and William Weld, both Republicans, seem to have attracted little gay and lesbian interest or support. Flood and Pierce voted against the gay rights bill in the legislature, and Pierce is actively campaigning for the anti-abortionist vote. Failing these litmus tests, the Republicans and Flood seem to have flunked out with most gay and lesbian voters.

Between Murphy and Bellotti, however, there is no clear consensus emerging among Boston-area lesbian and gay activists. Don Gorton of the Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance (GBLGPA) told *GCN*, "The gay and lesbian community cannot deduce from Silber's candidacy either that we should get behind Murphy or that we should get behind Bellotti. There is no unity candidate we can support. There are lesbians and gay men in Murphy's campaign, and there are lesbians and gay men in Bellotti's campaign."

Both Bellotti and Murphy have promised to overturn the state's foster care policy, which makes it virtually impossible for lesbians and gay men to become foster parents. Both have been supporters of the lesbian and gay rights bill. "Evelyn Murphy has lobbied for the bill over the past many year," says Arline Isaacson of the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus. "She's been willing to call and lobby some really conservative legislators, and really put her neck on the line for us," said Isaacson, adding that Bellotti has also been a supporter of the bill.

Gorton also said that both Murphy and Bellotti were attractive because of their commitment to the lesbian and gay rights bill. Gorton said that part of Bellotti's appeal in this respect is that "he has [Rep.]



Liz Highleyman/Laura Wulf

## Young activists target BU president

BOSTON — About 35 New England area students joined the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Feb. 19 in protesting the candidacy of John Silber for governor of Massachusetts. The students charged Silber with being homophobic, sexist, racist, authoritarian, and generally insensitive to numerous constituencies. Several students recounted personal testimonies to Silber's bigotry. Phone calls to Silber's campaign office from several news organizations yielded a "no comment" about the issues raised at the demonstration. Two weeks ago, a statewide coalition of gay and lesbian political organizations held a highly publicized press conference denouncing Silber. (See *GCN*, Feb. 11.)

□ Ed Boyce

## Hundreds of gay students meet at BU

*An organizer of the conference calls it "the largest gathering of gay, lesbian and bisexual students ever"*

By Ed Boyce

BOSTON — Over 700 students gathered at Boston University (BU) last weekend, Feb. 16-19, for the Seventh Annual North East Lesbian and Gay Students Union Conference.

Students travelled from colleges throughout New England and around the country to participate in the event. "This was the largest gathering of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students ever," said Amy Lee, General Manager of the conference and co-president of BU's Lesbian/Gay Alliance.

The conference featured keynote speaker Svend Robinson, the only openly gay member of the Canadian Parliament, lesbian comedienne/musician Lynn Lavner and Canadian vocalist David Sereda in concert, a dance Sunday night, and some 78 workshops. Workshop topics included gay men and lesbians in the military, the gay rights movement and Christianity, sodomy and other legal reforms; leadership development; fundraising; gay and lesbian people of color; anti-gay harassment; lesbian and gay history; homosexuality and the media; lesbian and gay poetry; and AIDS education and activism.

Jay Darnell, conference chair, explained that this year's gathering didn't have a theme because the organizers wanted to reflect the diversity in the community.

Echoed Jeff Nickel, co-president of the BU's Lesbian/Gay Alliance, "This year, we decided not to have one theme for the conference. But, if the conference were to have one, I have an idea, an idea I got from one of the most vocal homophobes of the 1980's, Jerry Falwell, who, speaking of his total frustration at the continuing growth of the gay rights movement, said 'The love that once dared not speak its name, now will not shut its mouth.'"

In his keynote address, Svend Robinson focused mainly on the pressures that a homophobic society places upon lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults.

"Our opponents' 'pro-family' rhetoric is in fact anti-family," said Robinson. "Their words and deeds, along with all homophobes, cause gay young people to attempt suicide at a much higher ratio than heterosexual young adults." He cited reports which estimate that 30 percent of all suicide attempts are by young gay men and lesbians. (See *GCN*, Oct. 22, 1989.)

In reference to the history of discrimination based on sexual preference by the U.S.

Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Robinson told the conferees that he had to lie to immigration officials when he flew to Boston for the conference because he could have been denied entry to the U.S. if he had revealed that he was gay.

During the many workshops, students heard from a number of lesbian and gay community members including Barret L. Brick, Executive Director of the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Organizations, Sasha Alyson, founder of Alyson Publications, Warren Blumenfeld, author and longtime Boston gay community activist, and David Scodras, openly gay Boston City Councilor.

Students took advantage of free time during the weekend by gathering in various groups to discuss how to do effective networking. Delegations from several schools around the country discussed forming regional lesbian and gay student networks in other parts of the country.

During the closing remarks, speakers encouraged students to become more active in the political process in general and to oppose the candidacy of BU President John Silber for Governor of Massachusetts in particular. Following the closing remarks, approximately 35 students joined the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights in staging a protest at Silber's house, which was widely covered in by local newspapers and television stations. (See related photo, this page).

Nickel noted that in virtually all of Silber's addresses to incoming freshman classes, new students are "told that if they're gay, they're sick and immoral. They are told that it is vitally important that any such feelings be totally denied, lest, God forbid, they be given in to some day."

Nickel added that Silber and those who share his political views "think we're radicals, and by God, they're right. Things are radically wrong when gay freshmen are made to feel worthless, and we will do radical things to make sure that kind of behavior doesn't happen anymore." Nickel ended his remarks by declaring that the BU president's "authoritarianism is a pitiful excuse for leadership, and this Commonwealth deserves better."

David LaFontaine, lobbying director for the Coalition, reiterated the call for students to become active in the political process,

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Debbie Rich

Evelyn Murphy speaks at a 1989 abortion rights rally

vices. Murphy was seen as sharing the responsibility for the budget chaos with Gov. Michael Dukakis, and was stung by the anti-tax fervor.

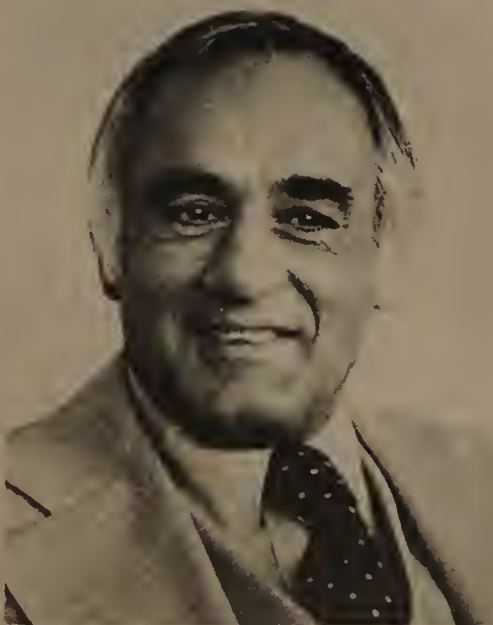
Bellotti narrowed her lead further when he announced that he was also pro-choice and pulled ahead when his campaign produced television ads proclaiming that position.

While Bellotti is enjoying front runner status now, many still remember and are troubled by his response to the Stuart case. When the police and the press reported that a Black man had attacked a young white suburban couple, killing the pregnant Carol Stuart, Bellotti joined the general call for the reinstatement of the death penalty in Massachusetts. Bellotti announced that he "would pull the switch" himself. Months later, when the police announced that they believed that Charles Stuart had killed his wife and himself, and the house-to-house search and random harassment of young Black men in the neighborhood were a result of police belief in a racist hoax, Bellotti's words came back to haunt him.

## John Silber

Many believe Boston University President John Silber's bid for the governorship, raises the stakes. Silber has earned a negative reputation in many communities, including the gay communities. Explaining his opposition to amending BU's human rights policy to include sexual orientation, Silber said, "To say that we are going to adopt language with regards to sexual orientation, that would permit all forms of perversion and sex with animals and children and anything else. We're not going to do that."

In an interview published Jan. 25 in the



Frank Bellotti

Mark Roosevelt as his campaign manager, and Roosevelt guided the gay rights bill through the legislature" to its eventual victory.

The Caucus, GBLGPA, and the Bay State Gay and Lesbian Democratic Club are

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GCN Job Opening  
Staff Writer/Circulation  
Co-Coordinator

**Available in April/May.** Research, investigate, and write news stories with a national scope and also stories about Boston/New England. May include some analytical/feature writing as well. Share responsibilities with other staff writer for coordinating weekly mailing of paper and processing subscriptions.

**Qualifications:** Strong writing skills and ability to write several stories under weekly deadline pressure. Knowledge of national/local lesbian and gay community and issues helpful. Strong organizational and record-keeping skills as well as knowledge of data entry and/or computers also helpful.

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Letter and “Speaking Out” contributions must be TYPED and DOUBLE-SPACED. Letters can be NO LONGER THAN TWO PAGES. “Speaking Out” contributions can be NO LONGER THAN FOUR PAGES. Send to: Community Voices or Speaking Out, GCN, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

A note to myself about AIDS

Dear GCN:

Upon entering my prison housing unit, I stopped at the desk to check in. I expected a pass-call-out for college. But to my surprise I had a call-out for Health Services too. I became very concerned about it.

The only thing HS would want me for was to tell me that my HIV test was positive. (Because at another prison I’d been at HS only sent me a letter that my results were negative and to be good.) So it had to be positive or why would they want to see me?

My heart tells me there is nothing to worry about. But my mind drifts between going to HS, what they want, am I going to die, etc. It also wonders if it’s a move by a sergeant, who has the hots for me, to get with me. However, if it’s not a move and if HS really does want me, then maybe Dad’s prophesy of finding myself in prison but it being too late may come true. For I have seven years left and would dread dying in prison. Dying of loneliness is bad enough.

My friend and I have talked about AIDS and his reactions if I ever had it. He said it wouldn’t bother him. He said that he would still love me and would stay with me. But I wonder if these were sooth-saying words of the moment in order to keep us together? Words that would be withdrawn if the reality of me having AIDS set in. Oh well, only time will determine what he will or will not do. For actions speak louder than words.

Although I do fear his anger. My body has felt the affects of his wrath, not only physical, which lasts only for a time, but emotional which takes so long to heal. Yet those wraths were of a minor, petty nature. What would he do over a major issue like AIDS? However, that is not my only concern.

I have received two two-in-a-cell major

misconduct reports (tickets). They were not sexual directly, but others wondered and made assumptions. And the form I filled out at HS before testing said that anyone who tested positive and is a potential danger or threat to staff or inmates, that the prison would place them in Administrative Segregation — the hole, isolation. So I wonder if those tickets before testing positive would count? If they would place me in the hole? Will I go to the hole in the morning after going to HS? For the nurse said any sexual or even two-in-a-cell tickets was putting others in danger.

At best, they will tell me it’s negative, but that doesn’t make it so. The nurse told me it could be in my system for up to ten years incubating.

At worst, they could tell me it’s positive. Then guess how much time I have left. Which, except for potential contributions I could make IN life if I lived longer, I am prepared and at peace to die. Although, I don’t want to rush death upon me.

In moderation, they could tell me that I am an HIV carrier, which would enable some more contributions in life, but would end my sex life, for I cannot see the possibility of infecting others just because someone did me.

At least, even if I do test positive, I should have enough time to finish critical literary works. Since I read an encyclopedic biography of Eric Erikson who, when faced with trouble, showed how to transform fear into courage and strength and proceed accordingly.

Even if I don’t have AIDS, this crisis has made Dad’s words shine forth. He use to tell us to treat people as if you will never see them again. Because you never know what the future holds. I didn’t listen to him, and then he died. This crisis has also taught me that I should keep my priorities in life in order: live each day as though it’s the last, in harmony among one another, because we never know when our body will fail us. Nor am I in any hurry to find out if heaven in the hereafter is myth or fact!

To me, if I died, funerals are stupid. Why mourn over someone for three days and be depressed, especially when you haven’t treated them fairly all along anyway? Seems to me if one couldn’t give me respect in life, why should they pay last respects at my death?

Furthermore, I can’t help but to have a cynical attitude. For America thrives off the capitalization of other peoples’ weaknesses and trouble. Well, look at the funerals, the cemetery, etc. Why should I let them pump even more out of me for a useless funeral, when the money could be spent investing in books to prod people to read, encourage admiration of all Nature’s Phenomena!

Hopefully,  
Danni Miskowski  
185-660  
Box E  
Jackson, MI 49204

We can only depend on each other

Dear GCN:

I saw a letter in GCN once from a prisoner whose friend had died inside, not just from AIDS, but also from loneliness. It touched my heart and opened new doors to study more on AIDS and I feel safe now and so happy to hug PWAs without fear of getting AIDS. It used to scare me to death. And it’s nice to care for people who need it when others are forsaking them. I catch hell from others for being friends with an HIV positive person in here, but I don’t care what they think.

So many catch AIDS because they don’t want to study about it and understand how it comes about (really). Many of them can’t read here, so it’s harder for them.

We are all family and we need to join together and help each other, above all with patience and understanding. We can only depend on each other in places like this. I would like to offer a poem:

*Your Friend  
My hand to you I give.  
It’s not a very big hand,  
but it’s mine to share.  
If you need help because  
two hands are not enough,  
or just to hold yours  
and let you know you’re not alone,  
just take my outstretched hand.  
I’ll be your friend.*

This is a gift from me to those members of

**Gay Community News** is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of ten, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in “editorials” represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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# Veterans and AIDS

By Cliff Arnesen

*This is an open letter to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and veterans communities of greater Boston and the United States, in regards to the AIDS epidemic, and NEGLBVs advocacy and outreach efforts on behalf of gay, lesbian and bisexual veterans.*

Nationally, there are over 6,500 gay, lesbian and bisexual veterans who suffer from AIDS, AIDS Related Complex or are HIV positive. Each year, about 1,500 U.S. military personnel contract the AIDS virus, and the disease will soon become the leading cause of death in the U.S. armed forces.

Locally, here in Boston, at the Jamaica Plain VA Medical Center there are 250 inpatient/outpatient cases being handled. Out of this number 80 veterans are HIV positive, and 23 have died. The statistical breakdown is: 60-65 percent are gay; 33 percent IV drug transmission and 1-2 percent are "other" and bisexual. Hopefully, the low incidence of bisexual transmission will help dispel the erroneous perception that bisexual people trespass on the physical and moral principles of others. We do not!

In the last year and a half of our five year existence, the New England Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans has set an aggressive agenda of outreach, networking and referral throughout the gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual and veterans communities. As a result, NEGLBV is pleased to announce two major breakthroughs in our bureaucracy that affect gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

(1) On 20 December 1989, at the invitation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Jamaica Plain, Boston Medical Center, our members visited the AIDS patients, clergy, social workers and support staff during their HIV Christmas party. As a result of that meeting and a year of sensitive discussions with other Government agencies, we have established the country's first HIV "Buddy Program" for veterans with AIDS. Hopefully, this joint venture will serve as a model for other gay, lesbian and bisexual veterans organizations in the U.S. The Department of Veterans Affairs, and its 142 medical centers are to be commended for their vision in taking the lead for their quality and care of AIDS patients. The VA cares for 6 percent of our nations 120,000 plus cases.

(2) On 3 May 1989, I testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, on the health care concerns of Viet Nam and era gay, lesbian and bisexual Veterans. This was the

*Lesbian and Gay:*

Alliance to Protect Human Rights & Equality (Athens, OH) \$100; Black & White Men Together/Tallahassee (FL) \$467; Gay & Lesbian Resource Center (Des Moines, IA) \$500; *Gay Community News* (Boston, MA) \$600; Iowa Citizen Action Network (Des Moines) \$450; Lambda, Inc. (Birmingham, AL) \$450; Lesbian Agenda for Action (SF, CA) \$500; Lesbian & Gay People of Color (Baltimore, MD) \$600; Lesbian & Gay Prisoner Project (Boston, MA) \$600; National Coalition of Black Lesbians & Gays (Detroit, MI) \$500; *OUT/LOOK Magazine* (SF, CA) \$100; Palestine Panel Project/Lesbian Work Group (Seattle, WA) \$210; Simon Nkoli Coordinating Committee (Cambridge, MA) \$500; United Fruit Company (Cambridge, MA) \$200;

Total: 14 groups (9.1%) \$5777 (9.1%)

*Women's Groups:*

Boston Women's Committee for International Women's Day (MA) \$200; Boston Women's Community Radio (MA) \$450; Chicago Catholic Women (IL) \$500; Dorchester Women's Committee (MA) \$200; Feminist Task Force (Sarasota, FL) \$400; Indigenous Women's Network (Lake Elmo, MN) \$600; Kwanzaa (Burlington, VT) \$450; Media Network (NY, NY) \$100; Mujeres Unidas en Accion (Dorchester, MA) \$200; Najda: Women Concerned about the Middle East (Berkeley, CA) \$470; National Lawyers' Guild/MA Chapter (Boston) \$500; New Haven Women's Liberation Center (CT) \$500; Rhode Island Women's Health Collective (Providence) \$600; Rosie Jimenez Day Coalition (Somerville, MA) \$600; "Say It, Sister" (Cambridge, MA)

the GCN who have brought so many of us closer together in this hellhole of a world,

In gay love,  
David Nuetzel  
A-077780 (W-1-N-11)  
PO Box 747  
Starke, FL 32091

## Rooflessly free

Dear *GCN*:

I'm sorry you 'have watched with great sorrow the Cuban initiatives in relation to AIDS.' That is, to have the population tested to ascertain the extent of the epidemic, then intern HIV-positives in facilities where they are well treated and given state of the art medical care, all free, while each continues to receive his/her regular job salary, and from where each can periodically leave to visit family or relatives, or even (escorted) other cultural events.

Instead you prefer the 'Amerikkkan Way' where no one gives a damn if you've got AIDS, except to fire you on the spot from your job, then discriminate against you in housing, health care, even at beauty and haircutting shops!

You'd like to roam free, so free you might not even have a roof over your head! And if you find yourself in New York and the free-blowing wind is in the northwest, you'd be so free you'd freeze your butt and maybe even forget you had AIDS! While you'd serve to amuse the wonder children of 'prosperous America' as they ride past you, looking at you from the other side of the sidewalk or their windows. Enjoy the 'land of the free!'

Ana Lucia Gelabert  
384484 Rt 4 Box 800  
Gatesville, TX 76528

## Seeking justice — and getting a little help

Dear *GCN*:

The struggle against AIDS and for a just and decent health care system — like other movements for justice — often requires vigorous protest and civil disobedience. When lives are at stake laws may sometimes be broken, and that means lawyers will be needed. Seeking "justice" in American courts involves a slow and frustrating process, so it is not surprising that few lawyers — even gay and lesbian lawyers — are willing to get involved.

Marsha Weber of the firm Weber & Fellman in Boston is one extraordinary and effective attorney who has done so. She has represented ACT UP/BOSTON and its members in several legal matters, most recently as counsel for all 11 ACT UP members arrested last fall for blocking the Mass. Avenue bridge to protest reduced funding for AIDS budget items. She spent hours on our behalf at the arrest, at the jail, in court hearings and negotiations with police and prosecutors, and at the trial. With her help, charges were dismissed against all defendants. Throughout the ordeal she was good humoured, helpful in explaining our rights and options at each stage, and always prompt and thorough. All of this was *pro bono*, without compensation even for her expenses.

We thank Marsha Weber publicly and urge support for her and her firm. We also ask other attorneys to get involved and to volunteer legal assistance to ACT UP and others in this struggle.

Steven Busby  
Michael Roos  
Ted Karavidas  
John Labella  
Joe Lavallee  
Kim Donahue  
Harry Leno  
Derek Link  
Matt Macho  
Tom Reeves  
Adrien Saks  
Cambridge, MA

## Sustaining recovery

Dear *GCN*:

Bravo to Leonard Tirado for his article on "Privatized Recovery" (*GCN*, Feb. 4)! The big bucks incentive for much of the addictions rehabilitation industry is sadly and disastrously lacking in social conscience and consciousness and therefore blindly follows the usual capitalist disregard of the poor and oppressed.

There is, inherent in the recovery from addictions process, an opportunity for the development of radical social criticism. In

fact, I believe, such expanded consciousness is required for on-going recovery, and a failure to develop it accounts for many of the problems in sustaining recovery. Anne Wilson Schaef began making connections between individual addiction issues and larger social problems (cf. "When Society Is An Addict"). Awareness of codependency brings in another essential perspective in the recovery process because it points out that recovery of the individual is impossible without an examination of the nature of the person's relationships in terms of whether they foster or impede justice and mutuality, or whether parts of the self are sacrificed in the service of an other's aggrandisement. Awareness of the self-betrayal involved in one's addictions leads naturally to social criticism, to the ways one has internalized homophobia, heterosexism, racism, disability-phobia, and the values of capitalism. This critique can and should happen, for every aspect of oppression as recovering people do their 4th and 8th Step work, and a way should be made for extending consciousness and action beyond the programs.

The strong point here is for recovering people to take seriously the 12th Step, not as an enlargement of privatized recovery, but as an entree into the larger dynamics of an addiction-oriented society that props up its oppressions by the systematic desensitization inherent in all addictive processes.

Robert W. Gunn  
New York, NY

## HIV Prisoner Support Group

Dear *GCN*:

*We have sent the enclosed proposal to the director of programs at Attica. We welcome and appreciate any comments you may have.*

It is hard to imagine the tension and distress of living with a lethal virus in your body and having no friends you can even talk with about your fears and concerns. HIV positive prisoners face the dire stress of the prospect of deteriorating health, and even death, without adequate opportunity to express their feelings and receive emotional support. Unrelieved tensions can lead to negative behavior, while depression and stress can themselves further weaken the immune system.

On the outside, mutual support groups have proven their success for people with terminal illnesses in lessening psychological stress and even markedly improving patients' survival times. People in the same situation can best understand each other. We need such a mutual support program for HIV positive inmates here at Attica.

This proposal is to form a 'Peer Support Group'. All that would be required would be a room and a call-out once a week. HIV positive inmates would be informed of the group by the medical department and be able to sign up if they so desire. The group would also include qualified inmate peer counselors. If necessary, for legal reasons, HIV positive inmates could sign a confidentiality waiver in regard to being put on the call-out for the group. (The group itself would have rules against disclosure of confidential information outside of the group.)

This program could be sponsored and supervised by the medical or the counseling service. Specific goals include: (1) ease the tension for inmates living with this virus thru discussion and mutual support; (2) promote a constructive approach toward helping each other and maintaining good health habits; (3) enhance a positive attitude for those living with HIV.

This program ia very simple and requires a minimum of resources, yet it is a very serious and vitally needed program.

Respectfull submitted,  
Joseph Keller  
86A 0580  
Box 149  
Attica, NY 14011

## Resisting illegitimate authority

Dear *GCN*:

Resist, in its 22nd year, was able to give out more money in 1989 than ever before. We gave out a total of \$63,542.75 in grants to 154 grassroots activist groups throughout the United States, working in the movements for social change.

Funding feminist, gay and lesbian, and AIDS activist projects is a priority for Resist. In 1989 we funded the following such projects:



## Prisoners

Continued from page 1

vides advocacy for individual prisoners with AIDS, educational programming is up to the prisons. "The prisons themselves should be taking the initiative to provide education for inmates," said Greenwald.

Judy Greenspan of the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, said the decision to stop segregating prisoners with AIDS is part of a national trend. She said that while "about half" of the states segregate prisoners with full-blown AIDS, the "mainstreaming" policy recently adopted in Massachusetts was spearheaded by Connecticut and New York, both of which ended their segregation practices within the last two years. But Greenspan said mainstreaming alone will not alleviate the unfair treatment prisoners with HIV face. "We also have to begin to set up comprehensive health care and diagnostic resources," she said. "Some prisoners with HIV fear that once they are back in the general population they will be forgotten."

Greenspan also said O'Neil's reaction was not uncommon among prison guards. For example, she said that when prison authorities in Nevada announced prisoners with AIDS would be reintegrated into the general population, the guards threatened a strike. She said the guards asked for, and were successful at receiving, a list of all HIV-infected prisoners.

Greenspan also noted that fear of HIV transmission through casual contact is widespread in prisons. Although the federal bureau of prisons does not segregate prisoners who have tested positive for HIV, they are nevertheless not allowed to work in food service or in the prison infirmary. □

## Atlanta

Continued from page 1

Catch One Disco in Los Angeles, for her support of the Forum; African American Wimmin United for Societal Change (formerly Salsa Soul Sisters), for more than 15 years of work and visibility in the community; Rev. Renee McCoy, co-founder of the Unity Fellowship Church and former executive director of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG); and Phill Wilson, co-chair and founder of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum.

Sunday morning began with the inauguration of the Unity Fellowship Church, a national Black lesbian and gay ministry, whose motto is "Love is for Everyone (LIFE!)." The Rev. Carl Bean and the Rev. Renee McCoy officiated the historic devotion service which was energized by the music of Lavender Light Gospel Choir. In the afternoon, a benefit luncheon and fashion show helped to raise money for AIDS organizations in Atlanta. Later that evening, a "Black Writers Reading" featuring three lesbian writers and nine gay male writers reading from their work, concluded with Assotto Saint receiving the James Baldwin Award.

The second annual Leadership Roundtable, facilitated by Angela Bowen, co-chair of NCBLG, addressed the six major agenda areas defined in last year's session: health, media, politics, history and culture, spirituality, and networking. The three hour session attended by approximately one hundred people began with reports about the specific accomplishments achieved in various areas since the initial roundtable. Afterwards small group discussions were held to identify specific objectives and programs for each subject area. The group agreed that accountability for monitoring the progress of work on the agenda was essential, and individuals were named for each of the six agenda topics. A seventh topic area in economic development was proposed, but was not formally discussed or included by the group.

### Criticizing the conference

The conference was not without several controversies. Passionate debate surrounded the choice to dedicate a Black leadership conference to Chris Brownlie, Phil Wilson's lover who died of AIDS in November and who was a white gay man. Other complaints centered around typical conference difficulties such as finding workshop locations (some were thrown off because hotel rooms were renamed for Black gay and lesbian historical figures) and late-starting events. Some conference participants were critical of the choice of the Hyatt Regency Hotel as

the conference site. Other sentiments reflected a consensus that the "leadership" aspect was missing from the conference agenda and that more attention was paid to the fashion show than the workshop content.

Lesbians at the conference were assaulted by numerous instances of sexism and looksism. One male keynote speaker told a lookist joke implying that a woman would need a magic shop to become presentable. In other instances, one male poet publicly called a lesbian "a stupid bitch," while another described a lesbian as "stinking" in one of his poems. Also, there were relatively few workshops focused on women's issues.

Conference organizers remained in Atlanta until Tuesday, Feb. 20, to meet with the host organization for evaluations of the event. Next year, the fourth annual conference will return to LA, site of the first two.

Some expressed hope that the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum will incorporate the lessons learned from this event to create an even better conference next year. □

## Students

Continued from page 3

saying, "We cannot afford to wait for years for you to become the leaders of our community. You need to assume the reigns of leadership today." LaFontaine told the students gathered for the closing ceremonies, "Because of your openness and your courage, you are in the position to teach those of us who have been active for a number of years, that the spirit that flowed out of the March on Washington needs to become dominant in our political organizations."

LaFontaine then put out the call for joining the Silber protest, saying, "Students at Boston University have suffered firsthand Silber's callousness and cruelty. You need to communicate your experiences in order to save the state of Massachusetts from making a grave mistake."

Scodras also emphasized that the lesbian/gay movement desperately needs the youthful energy and ideas of today's students. He urged students to be vocal and put electoral pressure on government officials. "Tell people that you only date registered voters," he said.

Amy Lee pointed out that many of the weekend's conferees were attending their first big lesbian/gay event. She told GCN that she had received numerous comments from students about how empowering and supportive the weekend had been for them. She added that many told her they now intended to come out to family and friends.

When asked about her most vivid impression of the conference, Lee said " 'Bonding' is the one word describing what this conference has meant to me. I've never felt so close to the lesbian and gay community." □

## Gov. race

Continued from page 3

planning to co-sponsor a candidates' night in the summer for contestants in all state-wide races, including the gubernatorial race, and each organization will make its endorsements individually following the event. The issues that promise to figure prominently in that selection process include choice, lesbian and gay civil rights, the anti-gay foster care policy, and HIV and AIDS funding.

"We want to look at what candidates can do for us in the future, as well as what they've done in the past. We want to get as many of them say as many positive things as possible about us," said Isaacson.

The Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights is planning a separate interview and questionnaire process. "The Coalition is going to settle for nothing less than highly visible advocacy of lesbian and gay issues," said David LaFontaine, lobbyist for the group. He told GCN, "We want candidates to put gay rights on their campaign literature, we want them to hold a press conference saying they support gay rights."

Andrew Held, another Coalition member and an uncommitted alternate delegate to the state Democratic convention, expressed dissatisfaction with both front-runners. "They're nothing to get excited about," he said. "Bellotti's for the death penalty — I'm just totally opposed to that. I feel like a democratic society has no business killing people, and there's the added problem of who is most likely to receive the death penalty."

Continued on page 16

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# BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Empowerment through wellness

*Byllie Avery talks about the road that led her to create the Black Women's Health Network*

By Julie Rioux

Black women's health pioneer Byllie Avery gave a presentation at the Harvard School of Public Health on Jan. 29. Titled "The Black Women's Health Movement: Empowerment through Wellness," Avery's presentation stressed the importance of personal experience in shaping the agenda of any movement. Delving into her own past to tell the story of a long journey of self-discovery and community awareness, Avery explained the process by which she created the Black Women's Health Project, where she is currently Executive Director, the first organization to focus specifically on the health care needs of Black women.

Byllie Avery's examination of the impact of race and gender on health began in 1970, she explained, when her husband died of a heart attack at the age of 33. He actually had been diagnosed as having high blood pressure ten years earlier. "In the '60's, Wesley got drafted to go into the Army. They took his blood pressure when he was sitting down and it was high. They laid him down for 20 minutes and said he was normal and that he was going into the Army. That was one way racism worked at the time," she said, "before the campaign about high blood pressure. People didn't pay much attention to things that were prevalent in our community at the time."

Her husband had been urging her for a couple of years to read *The Feminine Mystique*, but Avery said, "I never read the book because I was like most women. You know, we go to work, have two kids, come home, there was dinner, and all that and Wesley would go and read. The only way I could get back at him was to not read whatever he wanted me to read." Eventually she did read *The Feminine Mystique* and after that there was no turning back for Avery.

Avery told the audience at the School of Public Health "I'd like to share a little bit about how Black women's health issues became an idea that's catching on with women around the world and how personal experiences helped shape the women's health movement." The following text is excerpted from her presentation, and a conversation with *GCN* held after the talk.

### Working in the women's health movement

The first thing I figured out was that knowledge of health issues had very little to do with education. Because, if you are educated, you're still basically ignorant. The first part of learning about health is learning how to take care of yourself and assume the responsibility for it. Nobody was going to take care of us.

I got all involved in the reproductive rights movement. We would work in the teaching hospital. Three of us got identified as people women could come to if they were seeking abortions. When white women came we would give them the number of an abortionist. But when Black women came, we couldn't give them the number; they needed a lot of other resources and we were

just regular women working ourselves. But in mid 1976 we opened up the Gainesville Women's Health Center and a wellwomen's gynecological center. At that center I noticed Black women didn't do abortions. I kind of believed what I heard in the movement that we didn't get abortions, they did ("they" always meant white folks), we didn't really do that. I was also disturbed that not very many women used the well women gynecological center.

Four years after that, we opened up Birthplace, an alternative freestanding birthing center with midwives. It was there that I learned about prenatal care. Our intent when we organized Gainesville Women's Health Center was to show the total reproductive needs of women. Sometimes we have abortions, sometimes we have babies.

For the birthing center, we chose a big two-story house. Upstairs we had birthing rooms, and entire families came to have their babies there. The first visit was two and a half hours; we always asked that the men come, and that they also brought their young children. A lot of the men came on every single visit thereafter, and we learned that nobody else had ever invited them. We also did a history on the men — because they were part responsible for this. That got them involved. At the time of birth, many of the men caught the babies. The midwife was always there, but the men put their hands there, they'd catch the babies, they'd cut the cord. The children were there. We helped start a whole generation of young people who don't have to ask where babies come from.

People who came to this center received exquisite prenatal care. After they got the physical part, a large part was spent talking with the women about what was going on with them. It doesn't take but 15 minutes to do the physical. We found that what women really needed was the talk and the support.

### Developing the concept of Black women's health

I left the birthing center in 1980, I started working in a community college. I wondered "Why am I making this kind of change at this point in my life? What does it mean?" After I got there I was working with the Comprehensive Employment Training Program, designed to meet the needs of young women — mostly Black women — 17-25 years old, who had had a baby, dropped out of school, etc. This provided me a chance to look at myself as a Black woman. Before in my work I was looking at myself as a woman. I started working with young Black women, and that was the first time I thought about it, these women were having health problems that I didn't think we would get until we were much older.

During that time, I was on the board of the National Women's Health Network. We were in Ann Arbor at the School of Public Health and then I got the idea of Black women's health issues. When I came back, I

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Evelyn C. White

## Pleading our own cause

*The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves "is a heartfelt protest against the racism that cripples the medical establishment and consequently our lives"*

By Evelyn C. White

*The following essay is the introduction to The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves to be published on May 25. To order a copy, contact Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave., Suite 410, Seattle, WA 98121-1028. Enclose \$14.95 plus \$2 for shipping and handling.*

The photograph that gave birth to this book hangs like a talisman on the wall of my study.

It is a newspaper photo of an elderly black woman weeping over her dead daughter, who lies splayed like a Raggedy Ann doll on a grimy Chicago street.

At first glance, the photo does not seem any different than the thousands of others that have captured the demise of African-Americans in our cities. It is an image of blacks that makes most viewers ponder, usually with apathy: Drug overdose? sex crime? murder?

Under the photo, a terse caption reveals the truth about the 26-year-old black woman's death. Afflicted by a serious coronary problem, the woman died of a heart attack after rescuing her mother and toddler children from the third story of a burning building.

For me, this photo has become a symbol for the scores of physically and emotionally scarred black women who have died before the severity of their wounds could be recognized or treated. In the tragic photo, I see the faces of singer Esther Phillips, vanquished by alcoholism at age 46; Chicago journalist Leanita McClain, a suicide victim at 32; Olympic volleyball champion Flo Hyman, felled by Marfan's disease at 31; playwright Lorraine Hansberry, silenced by cancer at 34; actress Dorothy Dandridge, dead at 41 of an overdose of Tofranil, a drug used to treat psychiatric depression.

The images of black women without such public personas are as compelling as the famous faces the photo evokes. For every well-known black woman whose death has

been noted and marked, there are countless other black women who have died in the shadows. These are the black women in our neighborhoods and communities who suffer in silence from AIDS, hypertension, diabetes or lupus. They are black women who die without anyone ever asking why death came to call so soon.

*The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking For Ourselves* is an effort to make the photo on my wall less haunting, less foreboding and less of a reality for black women. It is a book that has been propelled by words written in 1827 by the founders of America's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*: "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us."

I believe this book is important because it is a direct response to an alarming health crisis in the African-American community. Over the past few years, I have observed a growing number of vibrant black women being devastated by a multitude of physical and emotional ailments, ranging from drug addiction to multiple sclerosis. Ironically, this downward trend has occurred at a time when this country has developed state-of-the-art medical technology that is envied around the world.

Without a sound body and mind, it is impossible for black women to attain personal goals or to provide the leadership our community needs as we approach the 21st century. For generations, we have taken care of everything and everyone but ourselves. Now is the time for us to put our well-being at the top of the program.

With the support of my publisher and the photo etched in my mind, I began compiling this collection in June 1987. In my search for authors I contacted a variety of sources throughout the country including black and feminist publications, black professional and community organizations, medical associations, leading health activists, colleagues and friends. Over time, the book

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# BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Pleading

Continued from page 7

began to take on what appeared to be a divinely inspired life of its own. While reading one author's piece, I'd notice a footnote that would lead me to another vital source on black women's health. While chatting with an author on the phone, she'd mention yet another topic that had to be included in the book. At times, it seemed as if the entire sisterhood was directing insight and energy to this collection. I welcomed all suggestions, both practical and psychic.

The most substantive influence and spiritual guide for this book has been the model set for me by Byllye Y. Avery, founder and director of the National Black Women's Health Project (NBWHP) in Atlanta, Ga. Organizing around wellness, Avery and her grassroots agency have created a black, *feminist* movement that is unprecedented in the black community.

As a participant in a NBWHP workshop held in the San Francisco Bay Area several years ago, I saw first-hand the inroads the NBWHP has made in helping black women address and overcome the numerous issues that have damaged our mental and physical health. Knowing that we were safe at the workshop and that our silence was killing us, we cried out about the racism, sexism, incest, domestic violence, homophobia, class and color issues that are crushing our spirits and breaking our hearts. For many of us, it was the first time since childhood that we permitted ourselves to be vulnerable and to reach out to other black women for solace. Every trembling shoulder was embraced, every hand was held, no tear was shed alone.

Like the NBWHP this book is based on the belief that as black women, we can be our own best friends. Painful though it may be, we *must* look at what ails us and how we can get better.

Knowing that without our health, we truly have nothing, this book is also a heartfelt protest against the racism that cripples the medical establishment and consequently our lives. It says black women have had enough of the statistics that tell us that the life expectancy for whites is 75.3 years compared with 69.4 for blacks; that the infant mortality rate for blacks is 20 deaths per 1,000, about twice the rate suffered among whites; that 52 percent of the women with AIDS are black; that more than 50 percent of black women live in a state of emotional distress; and that black women stand a one in 104 chance of being murdered compared with a one in 369 chance for white women.

We have to address and *change* the dismal predictions about our lives because we've got glorious contributions to make to society. We've got songs to sing, pictures to paint, poems to recite, children to teach, books to write, pies to bake, hair to braid, flowers to grow, businesses to run and people to love. There's a whole lot of living left in us yet.

The 40 pieces in this collection represent a broad spectrum of black female experiences and insights about health matters. They range from scholarly evaluations of the politics of black women's health and teenage pregnancy to personal accounts of management and recovery from a host of health problems including diabetes, lupus, cancer, stress, obesity, alcoholism, sickle cell anemia and hypertension.

Within these pages, courageous black women write of the grief they've suffered in the face of family loss and the sexual abuse they've endured in their homes. Based not on impersonal data, but rather on their own experiences, they offer advice and support for black women who are struggling to get and stay well.

Many health care providers and activists also tell their stories in the collection. As nurses, physicians, dentists, therapists and midwives, these women serve as role models

and invaluable links between the black community and an often uncaring medical establishment. Using their craft like a soothing tonic, black women poets share their enthusiasm for life through their verse. In a poem published for the first time in the collection, the late poet Pat Parker writes poignantly of struggle with breast cancer.

While it is an honest reflection of many of the health issues confronting black women, this collection is not a scientific study of disease. None of the information in this book should be used to diagnose or treat medical problems.

The writing style and approach to topics represent the diversity of black women who contributed to the anthology. The wide range of material — essays, historical pieces, political debates, poems, interviews and personal stories — mirror our creative and multi-faceted existence. Black women have never been one-dimensional people.

In this gathering of voices, black women have come together to love and comfort each other. Within these pages are the dialogues and discussions, prayers and potions that many of us have shared privately.

Like the photo on my wall, the stories in this book document our real pain and vulnerability as black women in a culture that devalues our very essence. They also testify to our energy, resilience and stalwart determination to lead peaceful, productive and healthy lives.

Please take this sisterly medicine and pass it on. □

*Editor Evelyn C. White, a journalist for the San Francisco Chronicle, has written and lectured extensively on black feminist and cultural issues. Author of Chain Chain Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse, she teaches non-fiction writing at Oregon's Flight of Mind writing workshop. Evelyn's writing has also appeared in various publications, including The Wall Street Journal and the Smithsonian Magazine.*

## Avery

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came back with a whole concept: The Black Women's Health Initiative. I'd been working nationally for six or seven years or so and I did not know many Black women who I could have a decent talk with about our initiative. I knew lots of white sisters, because that's who I'd been working with. No mechanisms had been put in place for us to

ference that somebody up there said we should have, we planned a conference that we wanted to come to. Secondly, we said that all of the presenters had to be Black women because that was the only way we could find ourselves. I went from knowing no one to knowing a lot of people. When ever white women would say to me "Byllye, what can we do to help you?" I said "Do you know any Black women in your home town who'd be interested in doing this?" And they sent them to me, and I remember a whole bunch came down from Boston.

We organized self-help groups among Black women across the country — about 120 or so groups. We found we needed to organize groups for us to start talking with each other — breaking the conspiracy of silence — and that most of us had never really talked to each other. We learned that most of us lived under a great deal of stress.

Around this time I read a survey stating that over half of the Black women between ages 18 and 35 rated themselves as living in psychological distress, and that they rated their distress greater than diagnosed mental patients of the same ages. Now *that* caught my eye. We're not talking about being crazy. We are talking about living on a day-to-day basis with psychological distress and still functioning and doing very well in society. Understand that the mind rules the rest of the body — so if we've got that much distress going on, then it's silly to talk about doing something about our health unless we're willing to first address the psychological distress.

### Learning about ourselves and each other

So we started to set up mechanisms by which we could come together and talk about the realities of our lives. It's pretty much like consciousness raising — we're talking about taking a model that was successfully used by white women. But how do we take that model and shape it and mold it so that it works for us? If we had gone in there and talked about how we're gon' to do some consciousness raising, we wouldn't have nobody around. That was a time when we didn't even use the word "feminism", we used the word "empowerment." You can take the same things that work and make them be your own.

We found that if we wanted to get anywhere in terms of changes in our lives, we had to do our analysis around racism, sexism, and classism. Then in order for us just to be able to come together and sit down and talk, we had to deal with homophobia.



Byllye Avery  
know each other.

### Revising the old models

The first thing I did was look at the model of the women's health movement set by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. They had a conference in 1975 and a group of us went. I remember that conference really turned my head around. I wanted to have a conference and bring my sisters together so we could learn each other and learn what our issues were.

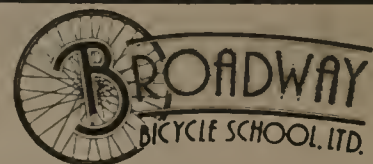
I pulled together about 21 women and for two years we planned the First National Conference on Black Women's Health in Atlanta. We thought we'd have 200-300 women, but close to 2,000 came. We did not have the postage money to get the word out, but we had people there from 22 states, including Hawaii. Even to this day I have women say to me that that conference changed their lives. We did not plan a con-

Cause the first time you get together and talk about something real, the men will say, "Well y'all just a bunch of dykes." We had to address that just in order to get the women out of the house!

We found out that most of us feel alienated, we'd been isolated from each other — we felt powerless — and a whole lot of us felt hopeless. Now a whole lot of us feel that wherever we are — whether you got a masters degree, Ph.D., M.D. all of the D's in the world — we still have the same feelings. We found that most of us thought that everything in the world that happens to us does not happen to anyone else.

At the '83 conference we had a workshop called "Black and Female: What's the Reality?" It was attended by almost everyone at the conference. In the big workshop people talked about being

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# Looking at the total picture

Andrea Lewis talks with lesbian health activist Beverly Smith

*This interview will appear in The Black Women's Health Book: Speaking for Ourselves, to be published May 25. To order, contact Seal Press, 3131 Western Ave., Suite 410, Seattle, WA 98121-1028. Enclose \$14.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling.*

**Andrea:** What kind of situation did you grow up in?

**Beverly:** My family was part of the large migration of black people who came from the South to the North during a period from about 1915 to 1940. My sister Barbara (publisher of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press) and I were raised in Cleveland, Ohio, but my family was originally from Georgia.

**Andrea:** Were there particular events that politicized you in your earlier days?



Beverly Smith

**Beverly:** (Laughs) Everything! When I was entering primary school Truman was still president. Although I was brought up in the North, there was still a tremendous amount of racism and discrimination. For example, public accommodations were still segregated, and that was true in Cleveland, let me assure you. I knew early on that black people were oppressed, but awareness came long before activism. It's hard to figure it out, but I know that I was very aware and very observant of race and racial differences from a very young age. It may have been the family. I think that the fact that issues of race were at least talked about in my family had a lot to do with shaping our political values. I grew up in a family of women. My mother worked and my grandmother took care of us. I never had any contact with my father or his side of the family. In fact, I had very little contact with my mother because she was working most of the time.

Many of the experiences in my family led directly to my becoming involved in women's health, beginning with the long illness and death of my mother. She died of rheumatic fever when I was almost ten years old. The hypothesis was that she had probably had rheumatic fever as a child and it went untreated — which was typical for someone growing up in poverty in rural Georgia in the 1920s and '30s. So when she got it again, her heart was already very damaged. Then during my first year of college, one of my great aunts who had lived with us and who had always had lots of health problems, began having blackouts and fainting spells and things like that. The symptoms began to manifest themselves as mental illness, though I don't really think that was the origin. She was in a private mental hospital for a few weeks, but when the cost became too much she had to go to a state mental hospital. Then my grandmother got very senile and would wander away from home. She was very confused and had to go into a nursing home, and of course there were limits to what we could afford. The whole thing of getting her into the nursing home was very traumatic and it was very depressing to go down there. Then the coup de grace was about two years after I graduated from college when my mother's

sister died very suddenly from a stroke and my grandmother died about three years after that. So that's my family. It's ugly, and telling you about it is very upsetting to me. I have to deal with the realities of it every day because I don't have relatives around. I'm very aware of how it has affected my life and my family's.

I came to public health rather precipitously. As I look back on it now, I realize that it may not have been such a singularly considered position, but now I can see the process. I remember saying to my aunt when we were

trying to get my grandmother into the nursing home, "I don't care what I have to do, but I'm going to do something so that people don't have to go through this."

**Andrea:** Was there a time when you became specifically aware of feminist politics?

**Beverly:** There were memorable incidents there also. I remember reading something about the battle of the sexes and thinking, "What is this all about?" In college I did have exposure to a lot of activism including the women's movement, but I can remember going to one of the first Women's Liberation organizing meetings in Chicago and thinking, "What are these women talking about?" I just didn't get it. I can't tell you how much racism was right in front of my eyes during college years. We're talking about the transition from the civil rights period to the Black Power, Black Nationalist movements, so maybe I couldn't see much of anything else.

**Andrea:** The women's meetings that you did attend, were they very white and middle-class?

**Beverly:** Oh, absolutely.

**Andrea:** So what did you see yourself doing? You had this degree in history and an interest in health issues.

**Beverly:** I had no idea. In college I didn't really have any interest in health as a career. I really didn't know that one could do something in health and not be a doctor or nurse. So I didn't know what I was going to do. But a few years after doing some graduate work in American Studies and History, all of a sudden I thought, "Well, I could go into public health." It was just like that. I started checking into classes and public health schools, and I took an excellent course in community health at The New School for Social Research in New York City. Then I applied to public health school, went to Yale and pretty much simultaneously got involved in feminism. I had been to some N.O.W. (National Organization for Women) meetings in New York during the early 1970s

but what really made a great difference was in the fall of 1973 when there was a National Black Feminist Organization Eastern Regional Conference. That was the first time I was able to be in contact with a lot of black feminists and that made a tremendous difference. One of the workshops I attended there was on black women's health, so my involvement in both feminism and health came at about the same time.

**Andrea:** Let's talk in general about black women's health. Why do you think we don't have it, and what do you think we can do to get it?

**Beverly:** There is no question but that black women have some of the worst health problems of any group. Two words came to mind immediately when you asked me that question and those words are *freedom* and *safety*. Those are the things that are most needed for us to have good health. We're supposed to have freedom but not one black in this country does and particularly as women we do not have safety. The reason that black women don't have good health in this country is because we are so oppressed. It's just that simple. It's about social conditions. That's really what poor health status is for most people in this country.

**Andrea:** Do you think that most black women in this country are aware of this? Are they conscious of the problems? Do they think "Hey, the reason that health is a problematic issue for me is because I'm black and oppressed?"

**Beverly:** No, because having the time to think about one's health in that way is really a luxury. For most black women who live from crisis to crisis — and not only health crises — you think of health when it becomes a crisis for you. You think of health when your child gets sick. So things get handled in episodic fashion. One of the things that you find in poor cultures is that people define illness as being nigh on to death. You have to be terribly sick in a lot of cultures to be considered socially sick.

Many years ago the World Health Organization made a somewhat holistic definition of what health is and they talked about how it's not merely the absence of disease, but it is also the presence of well-being — physical, emotional, mental and social. Well-being is definitely something different than the absence of disease. When you look at black women's health status, and this is true for black men as well, you find tremendous discrepancies between blacks and whites; the lack of longevity, incidence of certain killer diseases, infant mortality — and I think that the incredibly awful infant mortality rate in this country indicates the poor health of black women and of the entire black community.

**Andrea:** When you talk about freedom and safety, are you also referring to freedom of access to health care?

**Beverly:** Yes. Access is a very important issue, but the reason that freedom came to mind is that, to me, freedom means control over your own life and how you live your life. I have been haunted by a story that I heard on National Public Radio a few weeks ago about women who were mostly black and definitely poor, who were working in a chicken factory. There's an occupational disease called repetitive strain injury that people get from doing the same physical motion over and over again too fast and too often. These women were cutting up four chickens a minute and suffering from this disease. Their health was tremendously compromised by what they were doing, but they didn't have control over how they were going to earn a living, or over their work lives. It's not like they decided, "Well, I'll clean toilets even though I could be a cor-



porate lawyer" or "I'll go cut up chickens though I could go and be a college professor." Those people don't have freedom of choice. That's what I mean by freedom: control over your life and the choices that you have in the context of a just society.

**Andrea:** And what about safety? Can you expand on that?

**Beverly:** By safety I mean a lot of things. Specifically protection from and the absence of violence, whether that be racial violence, or sexual violence, or racial/sexual violence. Like when a black woman is raped by a white man, how do you tell exactly what is going on there? Is it racism? Is it sexism? It's undoubtedly a combination of both. I also mean safety from emotional violence as well. Everything from the personal abusiveness that can occur in an individual relationship to the violence that is done to our psyches as black women because we are so devalued.

**Andrea:** Things have really changed for the better in some ways. When I was a kid, terms like domestic violence, child abuse, emotional abuse, were just not used.

**Beverly:** It might be that emotional child abuse is the last to be uncovered and it's true that it's good to know about it but I feel like this society is an abusive society and knowing about the existence of rape doesn't necessarily change anything. There was a time that battering had not been conceptualized and yet the amount of battering hasn't diminished just because of it being named and services being there. A big factor now in the minds of battered women is homelessness. I mean, if you leave this man you may very well end up on the streets.

**Andrea:** It often seems that the inequities of our society are completely out of control and I wonder what can happen that will shake people enough to realize it. How are black women ever going to be able to achieve the amount of freedom and safety that they need for better health? And even if you did have a legitimate plan of action to solve the problems, would it be heard?

**Beverly:** I ask myself the questions you've just asked me night and day. I am engaged at the Department of Public Health in trying to work toward creating that kind of world. And I ask myself, it seems, hundreds of times a week, "Well, is it making any difference? Is it worth it?" I feel that even if it's not making much of a difference, it's very important for me to be fighting for these things and to resist oppression. It's the difference between being a compliant slave or being a resistant slave. I think your orientation or your posture to your oppressor is important. To me, the potential is in how much and how far the oppressed can push against and resist oppression. If every woman who has the potential to become politicized around her own health and her own well-being was in fact engaged in doing so and empowered to do so and organized to do so, how much farther could we get? The people who I despair over are the ones who could be doing something but for whatever reason are not. Someone might criticize me for saying that and they might say, "Well, don't you understand that the very nature of oppression is to keep people immobilized and not doing things to fight against it?" Yet I know that if I'm able to do it, then other people can too.

**Andrea:** Yes. I think that the fixation with self-gratification is a problem in our culture. It's hard for people to get beyond it. So many people seem to only be interested in getting as much personal pleasure out of life as they can. Do you feel that health issues are pretty far down on the list of priorities

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# Poems

By Marge Salvodon

## MOTION

Rolling and  
falling deeper and deeper between  
her legs  
as i become  
engulfed and  
consumed by  
that which is  
beckoning,  
summoning  
through scent  
and gesture  
I roll over  
and read her  
face,  
loving the  
delicate balance  
of ecstasy and  
vulnerability,  
we laugh and  
maybe touch  
each other  
precisely where  
desire meets  
energy and the word  
echoed over and over,  
is "hello."

## UNTITLED

My body feels like  
it doesn't belong  
to me  
it has been thrown  
into the  
whirlwind of  
nagging indecision  
stabbing pain  
relentless freedom  
My body feels like  
it doesn't want  
to cooperate  
anymore  
with the silences  
whose complicit  
mechanisms  
gnaw and bite  
on every inch  
of flesh  
My body feels like  
a cold, wet day  
a frayed picture  
of nostalgic memory  
of past blood and  
implicit threats.

*Marge Salvodon is an Afro-Haitian American lesbian whose relish for sunshine remains unsurpassed.*

## Avery

Continued from page 8

homeless, being abused. People passed around a box and collected money for a sister who came to the conference and who had nothing when she went back home.

In '84 we participated in a conference in Baltimore and we did the workshop again. About 300-400 of 500 people at that conference attended this workshop. The workshop leader did her opening talk and right in front of her was a woman who had white hair and a beautiful pink suit and the workshop leader asked her if she wanted to say something. She said she was the mother of 17 children — and everyone in the room gasped. She said, "I want to say that I attended the conference in Atlanta and for the first time in my life I learned that other Black women were victims of physical abuse." She said, "I only thought it happened to white women because that's who I heard it from." She said that one of the things she heard at that workshop is that if you are being abused and you want to get out, the first thing that you have to do is tell somebody. She said, "I have been married for 42 years and the first time he hit me I called my mother and told her to come get me and she said, 'You made your bed, now you lie in it.' I started talking to my daughter on the train ride back to Detroit. I want to announce to you that I am no longer in that relationship."

Two years after that, in '86, we met her again in Grand Rapids. She shared with the group that after she left her husband, he decided he would change. And they went to a Men Stopping Violence class — or something of the type — and they were back together. This is just one example of how we can address those issues with people taking charge.

### Talking with women about AIDS

We don't usually develop programs around any disease entity. Within our self-help groups we promote women understanding how to take charge of their lives. So they then have the strength to say to a man "You must use a condom." What ever comes along — whether its AIDS, CAIDS, DAIDS — we're only on the first of the viruses — we need to learn *how* to handle them. We need not just learn how to handle AIDS, but also gonorrhea, chlamydia, any

STD.

Another part is being there with them as they deal with the other realities that AIDS brings to them: that their brother is gay, their husband is gay, the pain, the suffering and all of that. To listen and be supportive when they say, "None of my friends came to my brother's funeral, only the old people came. How am I going to go back out and face these people?" Most places don't have a way for people to deal on that level.

### International women's health work

We just got funded by the MacArthur foundation to continue some follow-up with women in Brazil, Belize and Nigeria as part of our new international program. I went to Belize three or four years ago. They only have two gynecologists in the whole country and both of them were in the lead city, and none of the women liked them. When I came back the next year I said "Well, they really need some self-help." So we went down and did the "Breaking the Silence" workshop. They're struggling with the same kinds of things we are. We talked about birth control, and that was not going too well. It was too much of our culture and not enough of what they needed. So we showed them a slide show of all the body parts, then, two of us went into the bedroom and put the speculum in. We had midwives there too, and the women came in and looked at our cervixes. Half of the women elected to see their own and the other half took their speculum home. I remember one 64-year-old woman coming out with the biggest smile on her face! And she said, "Now I know why my husband loves me so much." They plan to set up a clinic in rural Belize. We did nothing but take the old model and used it again.

### Toward the future: an agenda for Black women's health

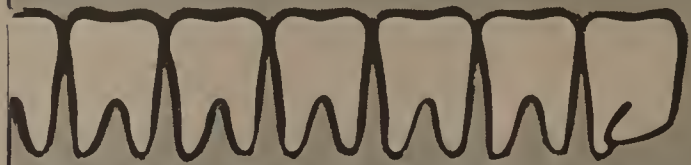
We feel as if we're starting to formulate our agenda around Black women's health issues. By June we'll open up an office in Washington, D.C., that will deal with public policy around Black women's health issues. I'm still raising money for it. We would like to have some sort of impact on the next presidential election.

*Julie Rioux is staff assistant to the AIDS and Reproductive Health Network and is a member of GCN's Board.*

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# Langston found

*The censoring by the Hughes estate of Isaac Julien's film Looking for Langston is a reminder of the forces that continue to control the public representation of Black gay men*

**Looking for Langston.** A film meditation by Isaac Julien.

By Colin M. Robinson

British filmmaker Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* is no biography. Nor does it pretend to be. Subtitled by Julien "a meditation on Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance," *Looking for Langston* is a critique of the "erasures" in recorded American history of the Black Gay (male) subject, and a fiction imagining — in the absence of firm documentation — continuities in Black Gay experience and culture between past and present. This is made all the more deliberate and poignant by the Hughes estate's successful censorship of portions of the film.

*Langston* appropriates Hughes and the ongoing question over his sexuality as a metaphor for the contemporary search for a Black Gay history that can valorize our communal identity and experience. It also makes implicit claims for the work of such contemporary American artists as Essex Hemphill and Blackberri — both featured in the film — and Julien himself as constituting an explicitly Gay modern-day renaissance in AfroSaxon culture.

Julien and his generation of young, university-educated Black British media artist peers have eschewed traditional narrative and documentary forms (historically associated with either a White imperialist or Black nationalist imperative) as reductionist of the Black subject. They choose instead to explore new structures to represent Black reality in film and media, structures which can admit a greater range of politics and perspectives — most notably critical or creative discussions of sexuality.

*Langston's* non-linear, dream-like structure is characteristic of these goals. The 40-minute film, which begins with Hughes' eulogy ("you guided us through treacherous landscapes"), weaves together actual historical footage from the Harlem Renaissance with scenes of the same period recreated in contemporary British settings.

Hemphill's hard-edged poems capture in an unparalleled way the gritty sensuality of urban Black Gay life, evoking the comparison between Hemphill's promotion as the premier chronicler of the Black Gay experience and Hughes' position as the representative of his race. Music also draws continuities in both its lyrics and rhythms. Freakish blues are juxtaposed with Blackberri's "Blues for Langston" (commissioned for the film) and the jazz rhythms of Wayson Jones' incidental music.

What is disappointing about *Langston* is its distance. Julien and his British peers deliberately reject the notion that their work in Black film should be limited to populist projects. *Langston's* bold images of Black Gay male sexuality are exciting and unparalleled. The film comments on its own revalorization of Black Gay men as sexual subjects by juxtaposing Hemphill's poem "If His Name Were Mandingo" and Mapplethorpe's exploitative photos. The American BGM will find in *Langston* a breathtaking celebration of Black Gay beauty on the movie screen. But as the first major cinematic attempt to conjure our reality, the film's dreamlike language preserves the "otherness" of Black Gay men; it fails to present everyday notions of our lives amidst its poetry and history and British marshes and fallen angels. The images it does offer of contemporary Black Gay culture — disco, cruising — are aestheticized.

*Langston's* most powerful message is its commentary on history and the importance of the invention of tradition. As a work of art, the film makes personal claims — thinly veiled as meditation — for particular historical truths. (In "Blues for Langston," Blackberri sings, "We're seeking what's true/'Cause we want to know you.") As a political product, the film's experience in the world is a sobering reminder of the forces that continue to control the public representation of Black Gay men. *Langston* begins with an excerpt from his eulogy: "There's a level on which the mockery of people, even their hatred, is moving —



Marlon Riggs (l) and Essex Hemphill in 'Tongues Untied'

## Not in knots

*Tongues Untied is the Black Gay Official Story*

**Tongues Untied.** A film by Marlon Riggs. With Essex Hemphill, Craig Harris, Steve Langley and others.

By Cary Alan Johnson

The truth isn't always pretty, but it sure does free the soul. *Tongues Untied*, a new video and film exploring African American gay life, is likely to make you cry and make you laugh. It may just make you put two fingers together for the friction of a snap. Filmmaker Marlon Riggs is convinced that the silence of Black gay men is our undoing. In *Tongues Untied* he inspires us to break that silence by loosening a few of his own knots.

This is the film we've been waiting for, the Black Gay Official Story. It's a work which should be screened in Sexuality 101 classes: an early '90s show and tell. It's the film you'd show to any straight person you wanted to understand you. It presents our lives not through any rose-colored vision of ourselves as ever-masculine, always healthy, and forever connected in loving couples. It shows us as we are: often angry, sometimes confused but always persevering. *Tongues Untied* is a picture we can live with.

Riggs takes us on a cinematic voyage, the journey of his personal development and quest for self-acceptance. From a childhood rife with confusion and a self-hatred fed by bigots and homophobes, to his search for self-image in the faces of white men on Christopher, Castro, and Spruce, the avenues of urban gay America. And ultimately to self-affirmation through the creation and embracing of a Black gay community. Not an unusual journey for a BGM coming of age in the '70s.

Many of us have known for some time that everything dope originates in the Black gay community. *Tongues Untied* chronicles house music, voguing and a particularly feisty style of performance poetry, capturing for posterity the richness of a unique culture.

The film features the work of Essex Hemphill, perhaps the most prolific and certainly the most well-known Black gay writer and performance artist. Hemphill's work is so much more accessible here than in last year's *Looking for Langston*. Though there are some double plus good uses of poetry in that ethereal film by British cinematographer Isaac Julien, the overlay of Hemphill's very contemporary, very visceral work seems forced at times. In *Tongues Untied*, Hemphill's work is used to its best advantage, painting a stoopidly honest portrait of Black men loving, fighting, dying and living on in spite of.

Bella Napoli, a black gay bar in Oakland, creates a perfect setting for the crisp Haiku of Alan Miller. Here Riggs uses a technique called video solarization which groups color ranges together in an image, effectively rendering the screen a high-tech oil painting. Inclusion of selected work by poets Donald Woods, Craig Harris, Steve Langley and Reggie Jackson (Master Snap! Grand Diva) makes the film a wonderful portfolio of some of our most talented wordsmiths.

*Tongues Untied* is funny. Riggs spins us off into a hilarious vignette on *Snapology*. (Snapping is an important and powerful

phenomena of Black gay life — ask playwright George Wolf.) This instructional, "how-to" sequence introduces us to simple, complex and double-diva snaps. ("A girl's got to be ambidextrous.") Complete with graphics and subtitles, this tongue-in-cheek look at the complexity and symbolism of one of the most quotidian of gay mannerisms gives us credit for what we've created. While Spike Lee is happy to have his straight characters snapping and calling each other "Miss Thing," we are culturally invisible, or at best sad misfits, in this brother's films. In *Tongues Untied* we take form before our very eyes and we like what we see.

If Ntzoake Shange be credited with popularizing the term choreopoem, we should thank Marlon Riggs for the first true *choreofilm*. Music, dance, poetry and the careful composing of visual image are gloriously woven because they are a daily part of our lives. Riggs shows us. We follow the slow falling ashes of an aging drag queen's cigarette, Nina Simone croons her blues and Essex Hemphill tells us that this "grief is a wig that does not rest gently on [her] head." We are invited to dance a sinister cha-cha with Hemphill and his frequent partner Wayson Jones: "Anger unvented becomes pain...unspoken becomes rage...released becomes violence," the moving rhythm of the words aided and abetted by the quick sequencing of shots.

Riggs skillfully draws the connection between the oppression and anger of African American gay men and that of the Black community as a whole. Footage of mid-'60s civil rights marches is brilliantly spliced with scenes of Black men marching in New York's Gay Pride Day Parade. We are Black and we are gay. Riggs says there is no prioritizing. Homophobia in the Black community is also explored. The scenes of gay bashing by other Black men, both physical and verbal, constitute the film's most painful moments.

My discovery after seeing the film that Marlon Riggs has a white lover struck me as ironic and may leave some feeling cheated. I do not fault Riggs here for his choice of a partner, only for what I see as a deception. Despite his obvious talent and the positive vibe of the film, one can't help but ask, does he really believe any of this? If Black men loving Black men is truly "the revolutionary act" as he states at the film's conclusion, then why isn't he acting? And why are we led to believe that his fixation with white men was a phase through which he passed? Certainly, there are many different ways to love Black men, but "coming home," as it is presented in the film, features our primary intimate couplings with other Black men. Clearly, the journey back to ourselves is a process, not an event.

Nevertheless, *Tongues Untied* is a Black gay time capsule. It is Marlon Riggs' gift to our community, and the culture it embodies is our collective gift to the double brothers of tomorrow. □

(*Tongues Untied* premieres in March at the Castro Theater in San Francisco. It will later play at film festivals nationally.)



Ben Ellison (l) and Matthew Biadot in 'Looking for Langston'

There are dreamy homoerotic passages, Mapplethorpe photographs and symbolic scenes of contemporary Gay culture in an overrich black-and-white texture. Past and present blur in the camera's focus as recreated underground 1920s Harlem balls become modern day underground discotheques, preserving the same loneliness, passion, joie de vivre and fragility the filmmaker imagines have always characterized Black Gay life. A voice representing Hughes' reads in the film, "Why should it be my loneliness/Why should it be my song/Why should it be my dream/Deferred overlong?"

Text is a central device in the film. Texts and images comment on and critique one another. Texts chosen from Hughes' work comment on the condition of the Negro artist during the Harlem Renaissance, with a clear suggestiveness for the contemporary condition of the Black Gay artists. Bruce Nugent's historic essay "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" is used, but Hughes' homosexually-suggestive poems are silenced by the estate.

because it is so blind." It ends with a symbolic raid by a group of White men of a Black Gay bar which vanishes, to the laughter of a group of seeming "fallen Gay angels." In between, *Looking for Langston* is an articulate argument for the legitimacy of claiming our own dreams. □

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# Publications

Continued from back page

I think that is tough in the gay community, because very often there are fewer women that I know who are involved, so there is just more male stuff that comes your way. So you have to deal with that and come up with a balance in the editing.

*Alan, you've mentioned Gaysweek several times already. Can you tell us about that publication and why it ended?*

**Alan:** As I look back on it, it's quite clear from the beginning that I was destined to be in publishing. Printing was a hobby of my dad's. He had a little printing press, so I was familiar with printing from the very earliest. I was involved in various printing projects as a kid, like printing business cards for the neighbors. In junior high school, I was co-editor of the school newspaper. (I was boys' sports editor, believe it or not.) In high school I was editor of the paper, which was distinguished at the time by being the only daily high school paper [in L.A.] During school elections, we would have the election issue with the bios and pictures of all the candidates. After we voted, that same day we would set up two versions of the front page of the newspaper with who had won student body president. I used to think that was so neat. We would have both versions ready to go, and then as soon as we had the results we would print the [appropriate] one.

Although I had always enjoyed writing, I got more involved in typesetting and entrepreneurial things, which led me to starting *Gaysweek* in New York City in 1977. We were into our third year — had printed 109 issues or something — when I stopped publishing *Gaysweek* because of burnout, and because the publication was not going where I wanted it to go. *Gaysweek* was a publication for the entire community, and it was a little tougher for a Black gay man to represent the entire community, because some people who weren't Black didn't much like Black people.

It would manifest itself in a variety of ways, sometimes overt although most of the time it was under the surface. Nevertheless, you had the sense that if you looked a little different or your hair was lighter or your skin was lighter, then things would have gone differently. You might have gotten a story that you didn't get or you might have gotten the ad that you didn't get.

But the racism was only part of it. Another problem was something that faces a lot of businesses, and that is undercapitalization. It's a little bit of what faces *BLK* right now, but it was more critical with *Gaysweek* because we had to come out every week. So there came a time when, although we had a very good reputation, there were just too many things to be done, not enough money or time to do them and not enough hands. I decided it was time to shut down.

*There are a number of publications in the gay and lesbian community that have come and gone. How do you see building a foundation under your publication to ensure that it does survive?*

**lisbet:** *Aché* has the potential to be self-supporting. There is already a need to expand the number of copies that are printed. We do 500 now, but bookstores are starting to place orders. Right now, 80-90 percent of the cost is raised through subscriptions and fundraising. We need to organize for expansion, and that is really a priority right now. *Aché* is a much bigger project than I can individually keep up with.

**Alan:** The answer to that has changed since I started *BLK* in December of 1988. I thought that there was such a need for it that people would come out of the woodwork ready to support it. I didn't expect that advertising was going to be a problem. I didn't expect that writing was going to be a problem. I thought that the non-glamorous jobs like stuffing envelopes might be a problem. But I figured there would be enough support in the community, especially in these days when there is AIDS around, that people would want to have a vehicle that could get critical information to the community in a timely manner. Actually, I thought it was going to be easier. I have to rely on more conventional means in building that base of support, which is a lot of hard work. I try to spread the tasks over as many people as I

can, so that no one person becomes critical to the operation.

One strategy that I have begun to implement recently is taking on allied projects, which perhaps will become profitable and take some of the financial burden off of *BLK*. At the same time, those projects may generate some interest and get some additional people involved in *BLK*. Strangely enough, one of the ways to make *BLK* successful is to get involved in other things. I'm thinking specifically of three other publications that we are starting: *Black Lace*, which is an erotic journal for Black lesbians, *Black Fire*, a similar kind of journal for Black men, and *Kuumba*, which is, as you know, a poetry journal for Black lesbians and gay men.

*Along those same lines, what are your long-range goals for your publications?*

**lisbet:** *Aché* is more than a publication, it is a growing entity. This is a collective vision. *Aché* is here for women who have dreams or women who have energy. It is starting to go somewhere. I see incredible potential for something that I don't even know if I can name yet. I am amazed constantly at how *Aché* keeps changing, yet it still provides a personal transformation for the person reading it, working on it, submitting to it. I want the project to go on forever, but I realize that it may not. I am conscious of documentation so the next group to come along can build on the work we're doing. Every month there is something new.

**Alan:** There are a few other projects kicking around in the back of my mind that if I would talk about them now, you guys would say that I was crazy — like producing a Black gay T.V. show. But they are there, and those are the kinds of things that you have to do, even though it's crazy to talk about whether or not there should be a Black gay T.V. show. Even though that's not something we're about to do this year or even next year, maybe it's five years down the road. Who knows?

There is that kind of master plan that says yes, *BLK* is a communications company. A Black gay T.V. show is not out of the question. Certainly I assume that *Time Magazine* and *Playboy* and the *New York Times* and other publishing companies are thinking about what they are going to be doing five years from now.

*On a more personal note, what was it like coming out where you grew up?*

**lisbet:** Many lesbians move halfway across the country to come out. I live and work where I grew up, because I believe it is important to increase our visibility. I feel fortunate to be in the Bay Area, where the gay community is a real force. It's a real exciting time to be alive, when we can be out and be who we are historically. Our fundraising events are also supported by the Black straight community and it is important to be out in that context.

**Alan:** I grew up here in Los Angeles and I went to New York in 1969 after college. I was there from 1969 to 1979, and then I came back to Los Angeles. It was during those last three years, from 1977 to 1979, that I was involved with *Gaysweek*.

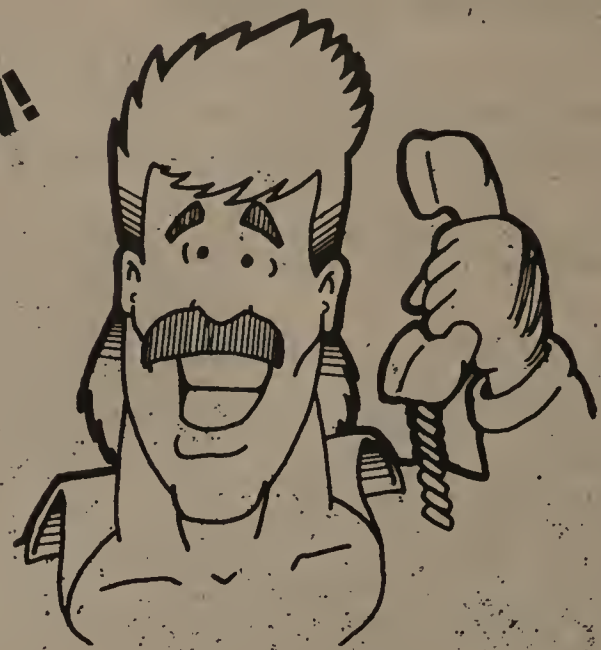
I think that my "real" coming out happened in New York. Certainly I thought of myself as a gay man when I was in L.A., but I guess being around your folks, being around the people you grew up with, you're kind of afraid to be real open about it. In fact, I remember that there were several of us who considered ourselves gay back in high school. There was a bar on Melrose Avenue called 8727, I think. I remember that we would go up there on the weekend and drive around it to see who walked in and who walked out. We'd drive around a couple of times and then come home. I remember once we kept thinking, well, who's going to go in and see what it's like? None of us ever wanted to, until the last time we did this. Michael, who is a real good friend of mine, got out of the car and walked up to the door and poked his head in for literally about five seconds and then came running back to the car. Then we talked about that all night, what he saw. Anyway, that's what it was like growing up in L.A.

I have another coming out story which is kind of funny. When I came to L.A. in 1979, I worked at this typesetting company. (I continued to work at this typesetting com-

Continued on page 13

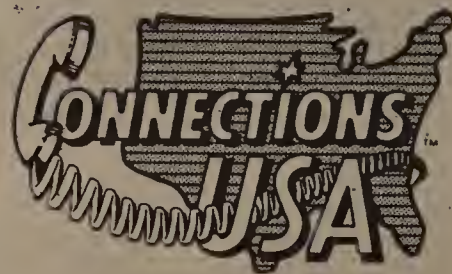
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AM TIKVA  
Boston's Community of  
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PO Box 11  
Cambridge, MA 02238  
Events phone:  
(617) 782-8894

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AM, Sat. 9 PM-2 AM

## Publications

Continued from page 12

pany until it was sold to a larger company and I was laid off in late 1988.) I was not out at work. There were probably a few different people who knew, but I was not out. I went to the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Conference, I got all jazzed and felt real proud. I came back to work and you know, people always ask you on Monday, "What did you do over the weekend?" I remember the exact phrase I used. I said, "I went to a conference that only Black gay people can go to." Some people immediately picked up on what I was telling them and said, "Oh, really? I didn't know." I was basically very supported, except I remember when I told one man, when I told him that, he said, "Yeah, I understand, but why did *you* go?" I said, "Listen, I went to a conference that only Black gay people can go to. I went there." His response was, "I understand that you said that, but why did *you* go? I had to explain to him that "Yes, I am gay." He said, "Are you coming out to me?" I said, "Yes," and he finally got it.

My mom and dad prefer not to talk about it. They prefer to pretend that it doesn't exist, but occasionally she'll make jokes. Dad simply won't bring it up at all. In fact, mom is over it to the point that while I'm trying to make *BLK* work, she has taken over a number of bills that I should be paying, which allows me to work on the newspaper. If she weren't paying those bills, I don't think *BLK* would continue to exist. So in a real tangible way, although she's not writing a check out to *BLK*'s printer, she is writing a check to pay some bills that I don't have to pay, allowing me to write a check out to the printer. So we might say that my mom is supporting *BLK* at this point.

*Who are your heroes?*

**lisbet:** That is such a hard question for me to answer. I am an ideas woman. I rely on the work of Cheryl Clarke, Pat Parker, and Barbara Smith. Audre Lorde blew my mind. These Black lesbians let me know that there was a place for me in history. There was a body of work I could turn to which helped things to make sense.

For me, *Home Girls* is like a Black lesbian bible; also *Conditions Five* (The Black Women's Issue), which includes some transcriptions. I like transcriptions because I feel they are more accessible to women with poor reading comprehension.

**Alan:** For the longest time, I wanted to be a filmmaker, so the first people that come to mind are people in film, Spike Lee and Woody Allen, even though Spike Lee doesn't like the comparison. I think they do something in their art that is essential: communicate with people.

There are people that make art for all kinds of reasons, but what I like best is when somebody does something well, with some style, with some craft, and at the same time connects with audiences. There are people who make art who don't much care about whether audiences view it or not. Then there are artists whose only concern is that they please the viewing public. We generally consider that art commercialism. But when somebody can reach the mass market with something that is good, I like that a lot. I think other people besides Woody Allen, who I realize I'm not supposed to like since he doesn't use Black folks in his films, and Spike Lee do it but those are two that come to mind.

I like to think that *BLK* does that as well. One of the things that I have in mind with *BLK* is that it be a publication for the person on the street. There are Black gay publications that reach what I call "the already committed," the people who already know what is going on. There didn't seem to be a publication that was reaching the people who were out dancing until two o'clock in the morning, who didn't have the least interest in politics. Which is one of the reasons that I want *BLK* to be free. To shell out money for it, you have to have a commitment and it somehow seemed that those people who are willing to pay or those people who would be willing to pay \$6 or \$10 for a publication already knew about safe sex, for instance. It was much more important to reach those people who would just pick it up because the cover was interesting and maybe not even open up the inside until they got home. As they are leafing through it, maybe there are a couple of articles their eyes might fall upon accidentally. I would

like to think that that happens across the country with *BLK*, because I don't see that there are other Black gay publications that are doing that.

*What's the most controversial piece that has appeared in your publication?*

**lisbet:** A lot of issues are not really comfortable. We had a theme a while ago on women who are parents of male children. Our next issue has the theme of Black women who have one white parent.

**Alan:** In the beginning, there was a piece called "Who's circumcised and who's not?" which led to some controversy. But Preston Guider's gossip column seems to always have been controversial.

Sometimes I think the gossip column is more trouble than it's worth. Yet I see people when the paper is distributed, and more often than not the gossip column is what people run to first — that and the cartoons. The idea behind the gossip column is not to hurt anybody or to make fun of anybody, but to have fun with ourselves, to exaggerate things in a fun way. I sometimes compare the gossip column to what Allen Funt does with "Candid Camera." The idea is to have fun with some of the things we do. When something is really, really controversial or something that somebody could be hurt by, we ask for their permission to put it into the gossip column.

*What is the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome?*

**lisbet:** I'm a very private person. I rarely put myself out there. It's been a big change drawing attention to myself by putting my name on the publication. I'm still not at all comfortable with it.

**Alan:** There are so many. The two main things that you need to get a paper out are writers and advertising. The biggest obstacle has been getting the word out that we are around and we are a credible and worthwhile and useful paper. When I have a chance to sit down with specific advertisers on a one-to-one basis and communicate why *BLK* is important, people generally understand.

*What is on your wish list? If you could have anything you wanted right now, what would it be?*

**lisbet:** Time and money. There is no lack of ideas for projects. We need 48 hours to get to them all.

**Alan:** A winning lottery ticket. A lot of the problems we have trace down to undercapitalization. My specific wish is for several competent advertising salespersons to knock on those doors and get those ads.

*Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

**lisbet:** Plug in, wherever you are. Start making the personal connections. Send in a letter, clip an article for us to reprint. For every woman who shares her experience or writes something, hundreds of women also share in it. Every one of us has a role.

**Alan:** In my role as publisher of *BLK*, I am increasingly called upon to give my views on some particular political problem or "what I see happening in the '90's", and it is a role that I feel somewhat uncomfortable with. Some people have told me that publishing *BLK* automatically makes me a movement leader. That's not a role I really want. I see *BLK* being about reporting what real, live movement leaders are doing or what the problems are. I think there is a need for a newspaper that simply reports what goes on. *BLK*'s job is to put the news out there so that people who read it can decide what they should do at any particular time. □



# Black Lesbian and Gay Resource List

## California

Women of Color United  
4159 Beta St.  
San Diego, CA 92113

Third World Caucus/Alice B. Toklas  
Lesbian/Gay Democratic Club  
Box 11316  
San Francisco, CA 94101

Third World AIDS Advisory Task Force  
c/o San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
54 10th St.  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Timothy Lee Coalition  
c/o Valencia Hospital  
523A Valencia St.  
San Francisco, CA 94110

Black & White Men Together — National  
584 Castro St. , No.140  
San Francisco, CA 94114

Connexions  
4228 Telegraph Ave.  
Oakland, CA 94605

Third World Lesbian Support Group  
Pacific Center  
2712 Telegraph Ave.  
Berkeley, CA 94705

Multi-Cultural Lesbian & Gay Studies  
415 Eshleman Hall, UC Berkeley  
Berkeley, CA 94720

Black Gay and Lesbian Resource List  
Cal.  
Wimmin of Color Rap Group  
2025 E. 10th St.  
Long Beach, CA 90804

Nat. Coalition of Black Lesbians & Gays  
c/o James B. Newton III  
4895 Deaton Dr.  
San Diego, CA 92101

Black & White Men Together — S.F.  
2261 Market St. No.506  
San Francisco, CA 94114

Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum  
P.O. Box 29812  
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Gentlemen Concerned  
P.O. Box 712298  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

BlackJack  
P.O. Box 8351S  
Los Angeles, CA 30083

Bay Area Black Lesbians and Gays  
437 Webster St.  
San Francisco, CA 94117

Black & White Men Together — L.A.  
Suite 109-136  
798S Santa Monica Blvd.  
W. Hollywood, CA 90046

People of Color AIDS Survival Effort  
3177 Ocean View Blvd.  
San Diego, CA 92113  
612/231-9300

National Minority AIDS Council  
5882 W. Pico Blvd., No.210  
Los Angeles, CA 90019  
213/936-4949

Ache  
P.O. Box 6071  
Albany, CA 94706

## Connecticut

Men of All Colors Together — Conn.  
PO Box 12332  
Hartford, CT 06112

## Florida

Black & White Men Together — B.B.  
411 Chapel Drive  
Tallahassee, FL 32304

## Georgia

Outreach Inc.  
1422 W. Peachtree N.E., Suite 814  
Atlanta, GA 30309

GAMA/Gay Atlanta Minority Association  
P.O. Box 3381  
Atlanta, GA 30302

Black Women's Health Project  
1237 Gordon St., SW  
Atlanta, GA 30310

Black and White Men Together-Atlanta  
Box 1334  
Atlanta, GA 30301

## Illinois

Black Lesbian Support Group  
c/o Gay Horizons  
3227 N. Sheffield  
Chicago, IL 60657

Committee on Black Gay Men  
P.O. Box 7209  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312/248-5188

Stop AIDS Chicago  
945 W. George  
Chicago, IL 60651  
312/871-3300

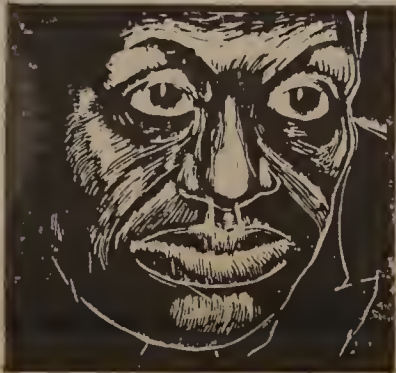
Black & White Men Together — Chicago  
P.O. Box 14622  
Chicago, IL 60614

Kuona Network  
4611 So. Ellis Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60653  
312/536-3000

Chicago Coal. of Black Lesbians & Gays  
c/o Max Smith  
5633 North Winthrop, Suite 312  
Chicago, IL 60660

## Indiana

Black & White Men Together — Indpls.  
PO Box 88784  
Indianapolis, IN 46208



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## Kentucky

Black & White Men Together — Louisville  
Box 1838  
Louisville, KY 40201

## Louisiana

Langston/Jones  
c/o Kohn  
PO Box 5061  
New Orleans, LA 70150

Minority People Against AIDS Comm.  
PO Box S7641  
New Orleans, LA 70157  
504/529-2661

## Maryland

Black & White Men Together — Baltimore  
P.O. Box 1334  
Baltimore, MD 21203

Baltimore Coalition of Black Lesbians  
618 W. Franklin St.  
Apt. 6  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Baltimore Coalition of Black Lesbians &  
Gays c/o Box 22575  
Baltimore, MD 21203

## Massachusetts

Black Men's Association  
P.O. Box 196 — Astor St.  
Boston, MA 02123

Men of All Colors Together — Boston  
GCN Box 1  
62 Berkeley St.  
Boston, MA 02116

## Michigan

Chieftains  
Box 04183  
Detroit, MI 48204

Black & White Men Together — Detroit  
P.O. Box 8831  
Detroit, MI 48224

Detroit Coal. of Black Lesbians & Gays  
PO Box 31-5177  
Detroit, MI 48231

Our Family  
PO Box 35361  
Detroit, MI 48235

## Minnesota

IRUWA  
PO Box 19146  
Minneapolis, MN 55419

## Missouri

Black & White Men Together — K.C.  
PO Box 414075  
Kansas City, MO 64141

## New Jersey

Working Together for the Needy Found.  
22 Halleck St.  
Newark, NJ 07104

## New York

Gay, Bisexual, Lesbians of Color  
Cornell University  
535 Willard "Straight" Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853

Study Group on Black Lesbians  
c/o Brooks Lesbian Herstory  
P.O. Box 1258  
New York, NY 10001

Salsa Soul Sisters  
P.O. Box 1119  
New York, NY 10009

Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press  
P.O. Box 908  
Latham, NY 12110

The Black Lesbian  
2130 First Avenue no. 2601  
New York, NY 10029

Committee of Black Gay Men  
1297 Bergen Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11213

Gay Fathers of African Descent  
Tyrone Martin  
212/690-3756

Gay Men of African Descent  
PO Box 2519  
New York, NY 10185-0021

Hetrick-Martin Insitute for the  
Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youth  
401 West Street  
New York, NY 10014

Other Countries  
PO Box 3142  
Church St. Station  
New York, NY 10008

UMOJA-People of Color in Crisis  
(AIDS Related)  
Jon Herrington  
212/724-2800

Committee of Visibility of the Other  
Black Woman  
c/o Johnston  
2130 First Ave. No.2601  
New York, NY 10029

Harlem Metropolitan Community Church  
PO Box S74  
New York, NY 10030

Third World Resource Directory  
Orbis Books  
Maryknoll, NY 19545

Conditions  
PO Box 56  
New York, NY 11215

Haitian Coalition on AIDS  
50 Court St, Suite 60S  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718/855-7275

Minority Task Force on AIDS  
92 St. Nicholas Ave. No.1B  
New York, NY 10026

Women of Color Photo History Project  
PO Box 2651  
Peter Stuyvesant Station  
New York, NY 10009

Third World Women's Archives  
Box 159  
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Committee of Outraged Lesbians (COOL)  
204 W. 20th St. Box R-93  
New York, NY 10011  
212/243-0202

Men of All Colors Together — N.Y.  
Box 1518 Ansonia Station  
New York, NY 10023

## North Carolina

Triangle Coal. of Black Lesbians & Gays  
604 W. Chapel Hill St.  
Durham, NC 27701  
919/682-6374

## Ohlo

Black & White Men Together — Cleveland  
PO Box 5144  
Cleveland, OH 44101

Black & White Men Together — Columbus  
PO Box 151276  
Columbus, OH 43215

Black & White Men Together — Youngstown  
PO Box 1346  
Youngstown, OH 44501

Men of All Colors Together — Cinci.  
c/o Scott MacLarty  
2626 Euclid Ave. No.3  
Cincinnati, OH 45219

Minority Education Committee on AIDS  
Ohio Department of Health  
246 North High St.  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614/466-5480

## Pennsylvania

ADODI PHILADELPHIA  
P.O. Box 19312  
Kingsessing Station  
Philadelphia, PA 19143

Concerned Black Men  
P.O. Box 20593  
Philadelphia, PA 11238

Les Femmes Unies  
P.O. Box 42833  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Black & White Men Together — Phila.  
PO Box 42257  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Black Gay Archives  
Box 30024  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Blacks Educating Blacks About Sexual  
Health Issues (BEBASHI)  
PO Box 26388  
Philadelphia, PA 19141  
215/546-4140

## Tennessee

Black & White Men Together — Memphis  
PO Box 41773  
Memphis, TN 38174

Memphis Black Gay Support  
1285 Niese  
Memphis, TN 38106

## Texas

Men of All Colors Together — Dallas  
PO Box 190611  
Dallas, TX 75219

## Washington

Gay Black Women's Rap & Support Group  
1505 Broadway  
Seattle, WA 98122

Seattle Men of All Colors and Cultures,  
PO Box 12348  
Seattle, Washington 98111

## Washington, D.C.

Faith Temple  
1313 New York Ave., N.W.  
(New York Ave. Presbyterian Church)  
Washington, D.C.

Black & White Men Together — D.C.  
P.O. Box 7311  
Washington, D.C. 20056

Nubian Womyn  
P.O. Box 6781  
Washington, D.C. 20020

Sapphire Sapphos  
PO Box 26327  
Washington, D.C. 20001

National Institute for Women of Color  
PO Box 50583  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Third World Gay Grad Students  
c/o Washington Blade  
Box 302  
930 F St. N.W. No.315  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Spectrum — See the Light  
Koba Associates  
1156 15th St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Upfront  
PO Box 2293  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Be Bop Books  
PO Box 3308S  
Washington, D.C. 20033

Black & White Men Together — D.C.  
PO Box 7311  
Washington, DC 20056

D.C. Coalition of Black Gay  
Women and Men  
PO Box 50622  
Washington, D.C. 20004

National Minority AIDS Council  
PO Box 28574  
Washington, D.C. 20038  
202/544-1076

National AIDS Network  
1012 14th St., N.W., Suite 601  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202/347-0390

National Coalition for Black  
Lesbians and Gays  
P.O. Box 19248  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Spectrum Project  
c/o Koba Associates  
1156 15th St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202/328-5700

## Wisconsin

Black & White Men Together — Milw.  
PO Box 12292  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

## INTERNATIONAL

Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Newsletter  
BL6C, Annexe B  
Tottenham Town Hall  
London W1S YRX

Third World Women's Publication  
c/o Kwame Nkrumah House  
173 Old Street  
London EC1 6NJ  
England

Black Lesbian & Gay Centre  
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England

Lesbians of Colour  
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Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M5W 1X9

Zami  
Box 7289, Station A  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada MSW 1X9

## PUBLICATIONS

Black/Out  
P.O. Box 19248  
Washington, D.C. 20036

**Drum** (publication)  
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## Smith

Continued from page 9  
for blacks?

**Beverly:** Health doesn't exist in a vacuum, so I think that working to guarantee, for instance, good housing for black women is a measure that would impact black women's health. A lot of people don't understand that the availability of medical care is not the primary thing that impacts health status. Economic and social forces such as good nutrition, good housing, clean water supply, adequate clothing, and sanitation influence health care the most. Having adequate access to those things is going to go much farther to enhance your health status than lots of medical care. Let's say you have a clinic set up in a poor neighborhood or in a Third World country, where you provide all the things needed to deliver fairly decent primary care. If the people you want to treat are drinking contaminated water, living exposed to the elements or not getting proper nutrition, then the health center really isn't going to help them that much. This is important for people to consider when they're thinking about health care. So even though health may not be high up specifically on the agenda of black women, I think that implicitly it is in some ways. The things that poor black women are struggling for would go some distance in improving their quality of health.

**Andrea:** One of the things that I personally find troublesome is society's attitude toward weight issues. One of the most inspiring things I've ever read was at the beginning of Alice Walker's book *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* where Bernice Reagon [black activist and founder of the vocal group Sweet Honey in the Rock] talks about the black community being a place where having hips is okay. She says that it's the nature of our culture and many of the images we are fed about how we should look come from the white community. What are your feelings about it? It's certainly a medical issue, but is it also a social standard that has been put on us by white society?

**Beverly:** I think that it's complicated. Clearly there are imposed patriarchal standards about what women should look like. So how do you find a pro-health position on obesity that validates some of the things Bernice Reagon says, which I think are true? African-American women do not tend to be sylph-like in their natural form, though we don't know what that natural form is exactly. The long, thin, anorexic look that is so favored is really probably not natural for white women either. I do believe that there is such a thing as obesity — of weighing so much that it impairs your health and/or quality of life.

Black women are more likely to be obese than any group in this country. We are more overweight than others and that includes black men. I think that's very significant. Some of the destructive eating may have to do with some of the pain we experience in other parts of our lives. I think that the emotional well-being of black women is pretty much ignored. The condition of our psyches, the inner lives, thoughts and feelings of black women are not paid much attention to. One of the lines in Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman?" that I think is heartwrenching is when she talks about her children being sold into slavery. She says, "I cried out of my mother's grief and none but Jesus heard me." That's what can be said about the emotional devastation that black women have experienced.

**Andrea:** I know that you do a lot of work around women and AIDS. Why do you think that so little attention is being paid to the subject?

**Beverly:** More than fifty percent of the women with AIDS are black and that group is followed closely by Latina women. I think this is because these are women who are forgotten and are some of the most reviled people in society. They have everything going against them. They're often intravenous drug users, or they are partners of IV drug users. It's also a group that is in the least position to be able to do anything about it. For women whose major concern is not that they may be HIV positive or in a high-risk group, it's difficult. They may be concerned about getting food on the table and having a place to even put the table because homelessness is such a tremendous issue. Food, shelter and violence of various kinds are probably much more important to them, and they are not in much of a position to

organize around the myriad of issues which impact their lives.

**Andrea:** It also seems that despite all of the media attention that has been given AIDS, people still feel very removed from what is happening.

**Beverly:** We as black women and black people really need to get over that because I feel that the way AIDS is developing in our community, the consequences are going to be tragic. I think it could lead to a diminishing of the black population, a quite sizeable decrease, because that's how the epidemic is running. We have to do whatever it takes to get over our sense of separateness. The class and anti-drug issues are tremendous. One of the things that gets me is how narrow self-interest can be. One's response to AIDS can't always be based on how likely one is to be at high risk. That's crazy.

**Andrea:** Let's talk a little about abortion. How do you feel about the Supreme Court decision that may lead to an overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the anti-abortion groups like Operation Rescue which have stolen their demonstration tactics from the Left? Things seem to have turned so upside down.

**Beverly:** I think what has happened since *Roe v. Wade* has really affected the reproductive rights of black women. Access for black women to abortion has been seriously compromised in the past several years. I heard an excellent speaker at a conference I attended recently. She said that it's a luxury to be able to focus on a single political issue because so often one's life is about surviving a host of different oppressions and then dealing with all of the problems and struggles at once.

**Andrea:** In an article [*Gay Community News*, February 19-25, 1989], you discussed abortion in terms of genocide of the black race.

**Beverly:** I think that being the target of racial oppression both as individuals and as a community can in some ways distort your views of reality. I have always marveled at the fact that some black people consider abortion and birth control as genocidal, when to me, they are the precise things that might enable a black woman to take control of her life. I think that genocide comes up in relation to birth control and abortion in part because of the generalized distrust that we as black people have toward a system that has never meant us any good and which has behaved in a genocidal fashion toward us. I think that genocide for blacks in this country is systemic. We are systematically deprived of things that make it possible to live decently — everything from a decent education, jobs and health care. The whole combination is what I would describe as genocide against black people.

**Andrea:** What can you say to black women about taking control of their lives and their health?

**Beverly:** We need more people. We need more people who are willing to get out there and do the kinds of things that need to be done on a host of issues, not just black women's health. But I think that it's very hard for people to be creative. It's hard to start things from scratch and to keep things going. That's one of the things that is particularly challenging in AIDS work because much of the stuff that is happening in AIDS is really new. In the work that I'm doing, I think the biggest challenge is building coalitions among black women and dealing with and acknowledging the differences that we have. There are always conflicts between black women — the problems we have dealing with each other.

**Andrea:** Around issues of sexuality for example?

**Beverly:** That's one of the places where it can be played out. But there are others. Audre Lorde talks about how we can be very, very reluctant to connect in positive and real ways with other black women because it's real hard when you are a member of a group that is so despised. When you look at another black woman you see all of this reviled stuff — you see all of the stuff that you embody and have been told is bad about you. It's intense.

**Andrea:** Do you think that many gains have been made in black women's health in the past decade?

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Smith

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**Beverly:** I think that it's helpful that people are talking about black women's health and that organizations like the National Black Women's Health Project have been formed. So I think there has been some progress in terms of consciousness-raising. But the overall status of black women's health has not improved measurably; in fact, if you look at all the indicators, our health is worse, primarily because of the Reagan and Bush administrations and what has gone on economically in this country. So on the one hand, I think there is more awareness of black women's health and more of a desire to do something. But on the other hand, we are working in an environment that is more hostile than it was ten years ago. I think that the more hopeful things that are going on are happening at a local grassroots level rather than at the national governmental level.

Besides the dreadful statistics and the specific health problems, I think we need to be talking about black women's health because our position and condition is unique. Our history, culture and present situation in this country all have impact on our health. So it isn't just about the diseases we get or our terrible infant mortality rates. It's much more complex than that. It's about how difficult it is to be who we are. When I talk about health, as I said before, I think of it in a very holistic sense which takes into account women's emotional, social and spiritual well-being as well as their physical bodies. Again, what does focusing on black women's health mean? For me, it means services that are consciously constructed to take into account the whole life situation of black women. There are hundreds of thousands of places and people in this country in neighborhood clinics and elsewhere who are providing medical care for black women. But that is not the same as *practicing* black women's health. What makes the work we do black women's health work is that we really try to look at women's life circumstances and value the meaning of those lives. At the very least, we acknowledge the importance of language and culture and the experience of immigration and war and sexual assault — all of the things that happen to women. We look at the total picture. That's what you need to do if your mission is to heal black women. □

Gov. race

Continued from page 6

"I'm concerned that Evelyn Murphy's style could work against [lesbians and gay men]," Held said. "She's only talked about gay rights to very small groups of people, like at the Human Rights Campaign fund. What we've found about candidates who are secretive about their support for the bill is that they weaken our position. Her campaign style suggests more and more that she has something to hide," he said.

Murphy as the 'choice candidate

On the issue of reproductive rights, Held said that he is "satisfied that both front-runners will be pro-choice."

However, many pro-choice activists disagree with that statement and cite Bellotti's past anti-choice stance. "I'm not going to support a guy who has actively worked against choice," said Angela Bowen, a Black lesbian feminist.

Many pro-choice activists are suspicious of Bellotti's current pro-choice stance, which is in contrast to his previous position. As attorney general, Bellotti supported the Doyle-Flynn bill, which eliminated state funds for abortion.

During his tenure as attorney general, Bellotti also argued against minors' right to choose in *Bellotti v. Baird*. In that 1979 case Bellotti defended a state statute requiring a minor to get the permission of both parents before seeking an abortion. The statute was eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that the law could be made constitutional by allowing a minor to seek a judge's approval in lieu of her parents' consent. The law went into effect in 1981 with that change.

Margaret Cerullo, a Boston area lesbian feminist, said, "I think Bellotti's really an eel. I don't trust his commitment on abortion. And there is no one on the other side of the abortion issue that can make any legitimate claim to be progressive."

"I think it's so basic, to look at [Murphy]

as the choice candidate," added Bowen. "She has been there. I have a 16-year-old daughter, and I don't ever want her to go through what I went through with an illegal abortion. I don't believe that Bellotti is going to veto any craziness that comes through the legislature on abortion," she said, adding, "The question is: Do women matter to you?"

Cerullo and others said that they felt that the hesitation of the lesbian and gay community to get behind Murphy may have to do with sexism. Murphy "is certainly the most progressive one out there — and I don't think you can underestimate the impact of sexism in this arena."

Allies

If lesbian and gay activists are not unanimous in their support of any one candidate, neither are other progressive groupings. Approximately a third of the delegates elected by ward caucuses on Feb. 3 to the State Democratic Convention are uncommitted. These include delegates from the Boston Rainbow Coalition, Mass. Teachers Association, AFL-CIO, and Tax Equity Alliance of Massachusetts.

According to Nancy Mills, director of Service Employees International Union Local 285 and an uncommitted delegate, the purpose of the uncommitted strategy is to get candidates to take strong stands on issues. "I think the uncommitted strategy is the right one," she said. "Murphy seems to be responding by becoming more progressive. Bellotti is responding by attacking labor leaders."

But Murphy's history makes some progressive voters uneasy with her, as well. As Secretary of Economic Affairs from 1982 to 1987 Murphy acted as Dukakis' liaison to the business community, and testified against some legislation important to labor activists.

"Progressive labor people are feeling like things are so slim and dim that no one's supporting anyone any more," said Harneen Chernow of the Gay and Lesbian Labor Activist Network. "Murphy is perceived to be pro-business and anti-labor. She testified against the Right to Know Law [which would require employers to inform employees of health risks associated with hazardous substances they use in the workplace] and other legislation important to labor."

Some argue that lesbian and gay activists should not put too much energy into electoral politics. "I find the governor's race incredibly depressing," said Boston lesbian activist Nancy Wechsler. "The person who I want to win is Evelyn Murphy — but she's awful. We have to put our energy into building an autonomous movement, and building links with other movements, so that whoever wins, we can hold them accountable." □

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I'm looking for someone to write as a friend. I'm 24, aggressive, enjoy music, art (drawing), and swimming. I'm looking for a woman who's a bit intellectual and sexy with a femme touch. Felicia McDONALD, 12894 — East, Drawer E, Clinton NJ 08809.

**LADIES ONLY—** I'm seeking a true lady friend. I'm 36 and 100 percent Butch. Come on girl and talk to me. Ruby JOHNSON, F02516-404, Box 8540, Pembroke Pines FL 33024.

I'm Creole, from New Orleans, and enjoy reading, art, poetry, and meeting new people with good understanding. I'm also a lesbian. Keishea ROGERS, 124855, Box 26, St. Gabriel, LA 70776.

Everyone calls me 'Pepa'. Originally I'm from New Jersey. My hobbies are traveling, singing, dancing and my sign is Virgo. I would like to meet intelligent, knowledgeable and understanding women. Tina McDONALD, A501875, Box 318, PO Box 8540, Pembroke Pines FL 33024.



I would like to find 1 or 2 gay people to write. I'm on death row and it's real hard to find someone to talk to that will keep things private. I think you know what I mean. It really doesn't matter what they want to write about, but I need someone to talk to. These guards really give a person a hard time if they know your gay. I like country music and good books. I can't write to prisoners outside Texas. Johnny JAMES, 839, Ellis I, Huntsville TX 77343.

I DON'T want money. I DO want a friend. I'm a gay man, 28, and would like to write (talk to) someone. Thank you very much for your paper! Richard HENDERSON, 85C 74, 135 State St, Auburn NY 13021.

**WANTED:** Young man, single and free, experienced in love. I'm into chocolate. Are you into vanilla? Let's exchange recipes and see what we can create. Write 'Candace' at: J.W. FITZGERALD, 98743, KSR, Lagrange KY 40032.

## Interested in ART ???

I'd really like to write some penpals who are interested in art (and friendship). I did some of the drawings for GCN's last 'Art and Poetry Centrespread'. Dennis LENNON, 95183 CCR Upper B-15, LA State Prison, Angola LA 70712.

It is very lonely here without mail of any sort. I play a fair game of chess and enjoy stamp and coin collecting. Also long walks, reading, sports and most all music. Victor CURTIS, 176-554, Box 45699, Lucasville OH 45699.

I'm shy, but cute, bisexual with 'very little experience', soft skin and enjoys one-on-one relationships. Looking for someone special. (I can't write other prisoners.) Gilbert BANKS, 806723, Box 316, Ft. Madison IA 52627.

Lonely, bisexual male looking for someone to write. Not motivated by money, nor headgames. Robert BOULET, 128442, Box 514, Granite OK 73547.

I'm a black female impersonator ('Diane'), long black hair, dark skin, smooth body from head to toes, like to party, do not drink or get high, looking to get a sex change one day. Love animals, kids and life. I'd like to write someone for penpals. Picture for picture. Ronnie ROSS, 150217, Rt 2 Box 2222, Mineral Point MO 63660.

## In jail in ZOO JERSEY !!!

GM, 38, exercised body, healthy and hot! Outdoorsy guy looking for another chance. Joe TERRACCIANO, 65988, Box 150, Delmont NJ 08314.

In matters of the heart, I guarantee only twice as much return as you put in. We can probably become good friends, but only if you write first. Phillip SMITH, 148567, Box 779, Marquette MI 49855.

I'm interested in writing other gay men, although I can't write other prisoners. They have real strict rules here. ALL letters will be appreciated. Thank you for your time. Raymond ALEXANDER, Box 473, Westville IN 46391.

I will like to meet a transsexual, bi female or butch female. They call me Candy Licker. I don't get any mail at all. Please write, Bennie Lee SMITH, 071034, Box 692 (A-32), Madison FL 32340.



# Calendar



**March 2 Friday** ☐ Sophie Pann and Nancy Hughes star in Michelle Gabow's new play **Knock, Knock** at the Double Edge Theatre, 5 St. Lukes Road, Brighton. Through 3/25. For info call 522-7377.

**Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos encouraged. Please specify if event is/is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted. Please use our format as a guide for listings and put each event on a separate sheet, if possible. Listings must be typed. No phone calls, puh-leeze!**

## 24 Saturday

**Jamaica Plain** ☐ **Gay and Lesbian Contra Dance** at the First Church of JP, corner of Centre and Eliot Streets. 8-11pm. \$5.

**Dorchester** ☐ **Mardi Gras Party** sponsored by Dorchester GALA. 8pm. For more info call 825-3737.

**Boston** ☐ **Meeting Men**, a workshop for gay men sponsored by AIDS Action Committee. 51 Stuart Street. 10am-3pm. For more info call 437-6200, ext 298.

## 25 Sunday

**Boston** ☐ National Coalition for Black Lesbian and Gay's Second Annual **National Day of Remembrance for Black Gays and Lesbians** will be held at the Les/Gay Service Center, 338 Newbury Street. Sponsored by the Boston Coalition for Black Lesbian and Gays. 3-5pm.

**Dorchester** ☐ **Memorial Service for George Georgeff**, at the Metropolitan Community Church, 131 Cambridge Street. 5pm. 437-0420.

## March 1 Thursday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN Production Night**. All welcome. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info, GCN: 617/426-4469.

**Boston** ☐ **The NAMES Project**, Quilting Bee at the Arlington Street Church, Boylston Street. 6-9pm. 451-9003.

## 2 Friday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN Mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

**Brighton** ☐ **Knock, Knock**, a play by Michelle Gabow. At the Double Edge Theatre, 5 St. Lukes Road. Thru 3/25. \$8. For info, 522-7277.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Dangerous Moves**: People with AIDS, Medically Assisted Death, and Critical Care Decisions. A panel discussion at Harvard Divinity School, the Sperry Room of Andover Hall. 4pm.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Virginia Uribe**, founder of Project 10, will speak about precedent-setting, school-sponsored counseling programs for gay and lesbian teenagers. At Harvard Graduate School of Education, Longfellow Hall. 7pm. For info, Michelle 523-9426.

## 3 Saturday

**Worcester** ☐ **No Attitude & No Alcohol Dance** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 90 Holden Street. 7pm-midnight. \$3 donation. For info, 508/755-0005.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Rachel Alpert**, singer/songwriter, performs at Indigo. 823 Main Street. 8pm. \$8. For info, 497-7200.

## 4 Sunday

**Boston** ☐ **Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders**, Annual Winter Party at the Harcus Gallery, 210 South Street. 4-7pm. \$25-\$500 donation. For info, 426-1350.

**Boston** ☐ **Bispace**, a place for all bisexuals to meet and talk. At the Les/Gay Service Center, 338 Newbury Street. 8pm. \$2 donation. For info, 247-6683.

## 6 Tuesday

**Boston** ☐ **Gay Fathers of Greater Boston** meet at the Lindemann Center, 25 Staniford Street. 8-10pm. For info, 742-7897.

## 8 Thursday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN Production Night**. All welcome. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info, GCN: 617/426-4469.

## 9 Friday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN Mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

## Weekly events

## Saturday

**Boston** ☐ **The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** new training session for hotline. 617/492-RAPE.

**Boston** ☐ **Gay Boston**, with Jim Voltz. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

**Boston** ☐ **Body Electric**: healing with group sensual massage for gay and bisexual men. 551 Tremont. 7:30pm. \$12. 522-9164.

## Sunday

**Boston** ☐ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth (BAGLY)**. Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. 2-5pm. 523-7363 or 1-800-42BAGLY.

**Boston** ☐ **Metro Healing healing group** for everyone. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. 426-9205.

**Boston** ☐ **The Gay Dating Show**, WUNR 1600 AM. 10:30pm-2:30am. Lesbians and Gay Men.

**Boston** ☐ **ALATEEN Group** open to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, 22 and under. 338 Newbury Street, rm. 202k. 6pm-7:30pm. Dave, 629-2518 or Frank, 666-8912.

**Boston** ☐ **Metropolitan Community Church** meets for worship and fellowship at 131 Cambridge Street. 7pm. 437-0420.

## Monday

**Cambridge** ☐ **Healing Circle** group healing. 5 Upland Rd. 7:30-9:30pm. \$5 suggested. 864-1989.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Lesbian Rap**. 2/19 Bisexuality, 2/26 Can women be sexist? Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. Free. 354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Boston** ☐ **Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights** holds bi-weekly planning meeting. Les/Gay Service Center, 338 Newbury Street. 7pm. 776-6956.

## Tuesday

**Boston** ☐ **Gay Fathers of Greater Boston** meet 1st and 3rd Tues. of the month. Lindemann Ctr., 2nd fl. 8-10pm. 742-7897.

**Boston** ☐ **Gay and Lesbian Support Group for Adult Children of Alcoholics**. Faulkner Hospital. 8:30-10pm. Intake interview required. 522-5800 x1908.

**Boston** ☐ **Lesbian and Gay Freedom Trail Band**. No audition necessary. YWCA, 120 Clarendon St. 7:15pm. Kathy, 424-7025 or Gary, 267-6186.

**Providence, RI** ☐ **ACT UP/Rhode Island** open meetings. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. 273-7228.

**Boston** ☐ **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. Gay and Lesbian Service Center, 338 Newbury Street, Rm. 203. 7pm. 49-ACT UP.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Bisexual Women's Rap**. 2/20 Living Situations, 2/27 Involvement with difficult personalities. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. 354-8807.

**Cambridge** ☐ **30-plus Lesbian Rap** 7-8:30pm. 2/20 Living in the Boondocks, 2/27 Setting limits. The Women's Center (see above).

**Cambridge** ☐ **Women For Sobriety**, a self help group for women recovering from addictions. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-9:30pm. 354-8807.

**Arlington** ☐ **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** meets on the second Tuesday of every month at First Parish Unitarian Church, 630 Mass. Ave. 7:15pm. Info: 547-2440 or 508/562-5807.

## Wednesday

**Boston** ☐ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth**. Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. New persons' meeting 6pm; women and men meet separately 6:45-7:30; general meeting at 7:30pm. 523-7363 or 1-800-42BAGLY.

**Boston** ☐ **Bisexual Children of Alcoholics**. Mass. General Hosp., lower amphitheater 7:30pm. 259-1559.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Say it, Sister!** WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

**Boston** ☐ **Women's Self-Defense Classes** sponsored by Women's Self Defense Collective. Studio 3, 731 Harrison Ave., 2nd floor. 6-8pm. \$10-\$35 sliding scale per mo. 625-1115.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Lesbian Al-Anon** with childcare. Women's Center (see above). 6:30-8pm.

## Thursday

**Northampton** ☐ **Valley Gay Alliance** meets 1st, 3rd Th. every month, basement of the Unitarian Church, 22 Main St. 7:30pm. 413/527-5310.

**Stoneham** ☐ **Incest Survivors Group** for women. New England Memorial Hospital, 5 Woodland Rd. 5-6:30pm. Sara Epstein, 979-7025.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Wise Woman Tradition Herbal Medicine and Women's Wisdom Classes**. Sliding scale. Whitewolf, 277-8232.

**Boston** ☐ **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** drop-in group for women who have been raped. 492-RAPE.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Incest Survivors Group**. Women's Center (see above). 7:30-9:30pm.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Non-offending male sexual abuse survivors** group meets first Thursday of every month. Cambridge Ctr. of Commerce conference room, 859 Mass. Ave. 8:30-10pm. \$5 donation. 498-9881.

## Friday

**Worcester** ☐ **AIDS Project-Worcester support group** for HIV positive, PWAs, PWARCs, supporters. Open to all lesbians, gay men. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Dana 508/755-3773.

**Boston** ☐ **Healing group** for everyone. Santa Fe Hair Salon, 528 Tremont St. 7:30-9:30pm. 426-9205.



By Ayofemi Folayan

In the past year and a half, two publications that address the concerns of Black gay men and lesbians have emerged in the gay and lesbian community. BLK, a monthly newspaper with national distribution is published in Los Angeles by Alan Bell, who previously published Gaysweek for two years in New York City. Aché, also a monthly, is geared towards Black lesbians, primarily in and around the San Francisco Bay Area. I recently spoke with Alan Bell, publisher of BLK and lisbet, publisher of Aché.

**Ayofemi:** How did you decide to start your publications?

**lisbet:** There are a lot of different pieces. I was already a publisher and had the business and the necessary tools and equipment: a computer and a printing press. I had worked for eight years on trade publications, and after I had worked on one for five years, I bought the company.

*Aché* began in February of 1989, and the publication has become a focal point for discussions within the Black lesbian community.

**Alan:** I was involved with a club called Black Jack, a social club for Black gay men that began as a jackoff club, and in some ways *BLK* has its genesis in that. Black Jack was started in '86, and after it got going, we decided we needed a vehicle to communicate with members that was more than a meeting notice, so we began producing a newsletter. The newsletter began as a one page thing, expanded to two pages, and at one point the newsletter was six pages. The newsletter began to be expensive, and I started thinking about putting in ads. I thought, Well, are the 250 people this is reaching really enough? Maybe I should put a few in the bars. Then I began to think, Well, there are some stories people need to know about, so maybe I should add a few items of interest rather than just club business. All of a sudden, it was looking like a newspaper.

About the time I was thinking of re-orienting the focus of the Black Jack newsletter was the time the typesetting business I was working for was bought by a



new owner and I was laid off. When this happens mid-career, you kind of look at yourself and say, "What do I want to do with my life?" I decided that I really did enjoy journalism and there was a need, and that this was a time in my life to do it, so it all came together at once.

Talking about the change from a newsletter to a newspaper involved quite a shift in thinking, because then you are talking about not just the gay male community, but the gay and lesbian community. And you are talking about "How is this going to pay for itself?" It was quite a bit different.

*Why did you choose to focus specifically on the Black gay and lesbian audience, as opposed to one for the general gay and lesbian community?*

## Getting the word out

An interview with Aché publisher lisbet and BLK publisher Alan Bell



**lisbet:** It seemed necessary and timely for Black lesbians to have a space to work on issues for ourselves. There is a tendency to lump all lesbians of color together. It's also important for women who are just coming out to know that each of us is like a huge door waiting to be opened, and that there is a lot of diversity within our community.

**Alan:** There was a need in the Black community. There wasn't a need in the white mainstream gay community. I felt that I was in a position to fulfill that need. It was a businessman's decision, like seeing that you need a mid-size automobile and going to buy a mid-size automobile. Of course, I personally was interested as a Black gay man, but there is a bit of publisher in me. I would be as interested in publishing a *Gaysweek* as publishing something else that interested

me, like a journal of film or a journal of music.

I came to publishing *Gaysweek* by a different route than some people have come to gay publishing. I came to it by way of the publishing, journalism and business ends as opposed to coming to it from the political activist end. I didn't start off as a political activist and decide that I had an agenda that I needed a publication for.

*What do you see as the primary difference between a gay male publication and one that addresses the lesbian community, either exclusively or in addition to the gay male community? How is that different for you in terms of your focus as the publisher?*

**lisbet:** *Aché* is extremely grass roots. Somebody who's never submitted anything for publication anywhere can still submit to *Aché* and be published. The name *Aché* is a derivative of the "Ase" from the Yoruba language of Nigeria, which embraces many different meanings, including life-force, power, grace, spirit, or the energy that all things have. A wide variety of lesbians is represented, from the very academic perspective to members of the community who are barely able to read.

Also, the publication represents the people who are putting it together in terms of themes and what articles are solicited. We have a steering committee who solicit submissions and edit *Aché*, and the people involved in the production are very present in the finished product. I see a publication like *BLK* as more together in terms of the business end. In our case, women have worked out their differences so they can put out the paper.

**Alan:** The easiest answer is that you are going to include items of interest to women as well as of interest to men. It becomes difficult, because not only are you going to include items of interest to women, but in terms of interest to men that you would have included normally, well maybe they are going to have a little different focus. Maybe you are going to say things in a different way. Maybe you are more concerned with balance.

Continued on page 12

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